South Haven Tribune

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January 18, 2026

Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

South Haven Assistant City Manager Michael Landis and Real Estate Agent Ryan Servatius discuss the current struggle of renting and homeownership.

'The missing part'

Real estate prices challenge first-time homebuyers in SWMI

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

Finding affordable housing has been a struggle not just in Southwest Michigan, but across the country.

South Haven, known for its beautiful beaches, is a popular destination for tourists to visit and own a vacation home. But when it comes to year-round residents, finding a place to live can be difficult.

"In South Haven, I generally sell more toward second homeowners," Real estate agent Ryan Servatius said. "We don't get a lot of young people here and it's not just because we don't have the inventory; we lack the kind of jobs that they're looking for."

As a result, he said the average age of first-time homeowners has increased in the past decade.

"The average first-time homebuyer in the United States is 42 years old," Servatius said. "The first time you resell your home now is at the age of 62, so we have gone up more than 10 years than what we had before in decades."

The biggest struggle is for those in the lower-middle class, he said.

"That's the biggest thing that's been missing. It's always been missing, at least in my 24 years of doing this," Servatius said. "You always had your second homes, you always had your low-end, your fixer-uppers, but that middle ground has always been the missing part."

For those who can't afford to buy a home, they rent a place to live. However, even that option can sometimes cost just as much as a mortgage now.

Assistant City Manager Michael Landis moved to South Haven in 2024 and has been house hunting for more than a year.

"The experience I found is, renting is something that someone can do, generally anywhere," Landis said. "There are places that I can rent today, rent tomorrow and be able to rent in the future. Is it sometimes a little higher? Yes. That's the nature of where we're at here on beautiful Lake Michigan."

Landis said a down payment and mortgage is only part of the cost when buying a house.

"A mortgage payment is one thing, but it's one slice of the pie," he said. "The other taxes, you have utility, you have your general expenses or closing costs, the elements that you got to factor in."

Starter homes for young homebuyers in the area a

See HOMEBUYERS, page A5

Senior housing project in SH faces delay

Senior services denied state grant over lack of interest

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — A representative from Van Buren County Senior Services gave an update to the South Haven Township board on the senior housing project.

The representative said they applied for a grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority in the fall of 2025 and recently learned they did not receive the grant funding due to a lack of a request for proposals.

She said they are going to continue pursuing a request for proposal and apply for the grant again in the spring.

The board approved a recommendation that shows the township's support of the project and the township will help request proposals on behalf of senior services.

PUD project

The board approved the rezoning of the Lighthouse Ridge planned unit development project that was recommended by the planning commission.

The property will be rezoned to be part of the medium density residential district to the multiple family residential district.

This rezoning also required an amendment to the South Haven Township zoning ordinance and map, which the board approved during Wednesday's meeting.

Brogan Developments is heading the Lighthouse Ridge project that will have 52 units across four apartment building, a clubhouse and a playground.

Construction is scheduled to start in May.

See DELAY, page A2

Should cell phones be banned from classrooms? Michigan House votes yes

By DANIELLE JAMES
MLive.com (TNS)

LANSING — The Michigan House rang in the first session day of 2026 by voting to approve a bill limiting the use of cell phones in classrooms.

Last year, the bill sponsored by Rep. Mark Tisdel, R-Rochester Hills, failed to earn bipartisan support in the House.

This time around it passed, 99 to 10, with both Democrats and Republicans voting in favor on Wednesday, Jan. 14.

If signed into law, the change would take effect next school year, which House Speaker Matt Hall, R-Richland Township, said gives school districts plenty of time time to plan.

"We want our kids focused on (the) classroom, focused on their teachers. We want them learning," Hall said. "We don't want them distracted, playing games on their phones."

Hall said most school districts "don't have the courage to deal with this locally, so we're going to pass a law that requires them to do it."

The legislation was also one of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's legislative priorities in 2025.

Its movement comes ahead of her annual State of the State address, and could be claimed as an early win if the ban passes through the Senate and to Whitmer's desk before the date of her not-yet-announced speech.

"I understand the need to be connected to your child, but we can do better," Whitmer previously said during her February 2025 State of the State address. "This year let's pass bipartisan legislation to limit the use of phones in class."

School districts around the state have grappled with how to best keep kids focused on learning and off smartphones. Constant access to social media on smartphones can also lead to increased mental health issues and bullying, according to experts.

In Michigan, schools are now allowed to set their own policies governing the student use of mobile devices, including cell phones.

A number of districts around the state have adopted some form of cellphone use policy, though the exact number isn't known, the Michigan Department of Education has said.

The bill as passed would require public school boards and charter schools to create a cell phone device policy that specifically prohibits its use during instructional time.

It carves out exemptions for medically-necessary devices, along with district-owned technology like tablets and laptops and devices designated to be used for instructional purposes.

Schools are able to enact more strict bans if they choose.

Republicans who voted in favor highlighted that the bill preserves some local control, as districts may allow students to keep phones on their person, require devices to be stored in lockers or manage usage on a classroom-by-classroom basis.

A previous version of the bill would have mandated stricter requirements – also banning cell phone use

See PHONES, page A3

Photo provided / Josh Cauldwell-Clarke and Jase Riley

British influencers Josh Cauldwell-Clarke and Jase Riley react to seeing Lake Michigan for the first time.

British influencers explore SH amid Michigan trip

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — British social media influencers Josh Cauldwell-Clarke and Jase Riley are visiting Michigan for the first time and their first stop was in South Haven last weekend.

The duo from the United Kingdom are known for their travels and reactions to American culture on social media and document their journey to experience America one state at a time.

After eight months of trying to get an American Visa, the duo announced on Jan. 10 that their next adventure would be Michigan.

While in South Haven, the duo had breakfast at Six Chicks, lunch at Clementine's and went shopping downtown.

Their videos went viral fast, especially their reactions to seeing Lake

See INFLUENCERS, page A2

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 127th Year

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Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

OBITUARIES

Marilynn VanderKolk

Oct. 19, 1943 – Dec. 19, 2025

Marilynn Rose VanderKolk was born, in Chicago, Ill. to Henry and Eleanore (Webb) Bates. Henry worked as a machinist while Eleanore raised Marilynn and her younger brother Bob.

After attending primary and secondary school in Chicago, Marilynn attended Hope College in Holland, Mich. where she would meet her future husband of nearly 60 years, James VanderKolk. Jim and Marilynn were married in June of 1965 and settled in the quiet lakeside town of South Haven, Mich. where both were teachers. They also found their place in the community of Hope Church, where both became lifelong members and supporters.

In 1969 Marilynn gave birth to their son Brian, with daughter Julie following two years later. Marilynn left teaching to raise the children while Jim continued teaching and working seasonal jobs during the summer.

In 1981 a new chapter began when the family relocated to a blueberry farm outside of town. Jim had worked summers with the Michigan Blueberry Growers Association and was looking for the opportunity to return to the farm life of his youth. Marilynn, being from Chicago, didn't have that experience to fall back on but willingly made the transition. She quickly adapted to the new demands of farm life, tirelessly managing family and farm with the grit and positivity that never wavered throughout her life.

Eventually Jim and Marilynn decided to semi-retire from farm life and moved into what would become their "Lake House". The Lake House became a new project for them and a destination for family and friends to gather and enjoy the beauty of the lake. Marilynn loved the property and was determined to remain there even after Jim passed away in 2024. After his death she channeled her energies into extensive remodeling, relishing the transformation and relishing the serenity of her sanctuary.

Even in later years, through two cancer diagnoses of her own and caring for Jim during his cancer battle she persevered; always resolute and accepting the challenges life presented.

Marilynn was also profoundly blessed by the support of lifelong friends, generous neighbors and devoted family- all of whom lent a hand whenever the need arose.

Marilynn passed away peacefully on Dec. 19, 2025; her legacy remains with her greatest source of pride, her family. Her son Brian and wife Kerry have three children: Abby, Alec and Brandon. Daughter Julie and her husband Scott continue to operate the family farm where they raised their children Colten, Taylor and Trevor. Colten and his wife Katarina are parents to great-grandchildren Kole and Aurora, whom Marilynn adored and never missed an opportunity to talk about.

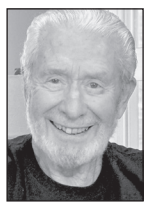
Marilynn will also be missed by her brother Robert Bates, his wife Kathryn and their children Jeff, Erin and Tim as well as Marilynn's brother-in-law John VanderKolk, his wife Lori and their children Jacob and Valerie.

A family memorial gathering will be held this summer in lieu of a funeral service. Those who would like to offer contributions in Marilynn's honor are encouraged to consider donating to Hope Church or We Care, an organization Marilynn volunteered with for many years.

Those wishing to share a memory of Marilynn online may do so at www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Philip Novak



Philip Bruce Novak (Couturier) was born on Feb. 26, 1938, at South Haven Hospital. He enjoyed an idyllic childhood growing up near the shores of Lake Michigan.

During high school, he met the love of his life, Lynne Weimer, who quickly stole his heart. While Lynne was finishing high school, Phil enlisted in the United States Navy.

In 1957, he proudly served aboard the USS Nantahala as a radar man. After his honorable discharge, Phil married his high school sweetheart, Lynne, beginning a devoted partnership that would last a lifetime.

Phil enrolled at Michigan State University, where he and Lynne worked tirelessly to put him through school while raising two of their children. After graduating, the family moved to Anderson, Ind., where Phil began his career with General Motors in production. During this time, they welcomed their third child, and Phil continued to advance through the corporate ranks.

Following the passing of Lynne's mother, the family returned to Michigan.

In retirement, Phil fully embraced life, enjoying boating, fishing and reconnecting with many cherished friends. He was known for his unique sense of humor and his gift for storytelling, which brought laughter and joy to his family. Phil possessed a strong work ethic, a deep love for his grandchildren and a steady presence that anchored his family.

He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

No formal services will be held.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence go to www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Photo provided / Josh Cauldwell-Clarke and Jase Riley

British influencers Josh Cauldwell-Clarke and Jase Riley begin their journey to experience Michigan for the first time in South Haven.

INFLUENCERS

From page A1

Michigan for the first time.

"There is no way you're telling me that is a lake," Cauldwell-Clarke said in the video. "That is the Pacific Ocean mate."

After spending a couple days in South Haven, they continued their journey to Saugatuck, Holland and Grand Rapids.

The duo plans to venture all the way up to the Upper Peninsula to get the full Michigan experience.

To follow their Michigan adventure, people can go to their YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@joshandjase, TikTok at www.tiktok.com/@joshandjase, Instgram at www.instagram.com/joshandjase and Facebook at www.facebook.com/p/Josh-Jase-61557257254262/.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

DELAY

From page A1

Other items

The board approved amendments to the 2025 budget.

Township Clerk Brenda Bertorelli said minor adjustments were made to clean up the budget. The changes included increasing the budget for zoning fees and the total revenue was increased to $20,391.

The board approved a special land use recommendation from the planning commission.

The land use would allow for a 42-foot-by-64-foot storage building to be built on RCQ Properties LLC's property, where an old house used to be.

Lastly, the board approved guidelines for poverty exemptions.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Lunar!

unar is a one-year-old tortoiseshell beauty with medium-length fur that makes her look like a walking little fluff ball. True to her name, she has a calm, gentle presence and a way of quietly orbiting her favorite people. Once she chooses you, she likes to stay close, preferably curled up nearby or settling in for some quality cuddle time.
This sweet girl loves cozy nap spots, soft blankets, and soaking up attention from the humans she trusts. Lunar is affectionate without being demanding and has that peaceful, comforting energy that makes a house feel like home. If you are looking for a fluffy companion who enjoys calm moments, warm laps, and being part of your daily routine, Lunar may be the perfect match.
Submit an adoption survey at al-van.org/adopt.

Fur Ball 2026
Fur Ball 2026 is almost here. Join Al-Van Humane Society on February 21st for Breakfast at Tiffany's, a glamorous evening inspired by Audrey Hepburn herself. Enjoy dinner, a cash bar, live and silent auctions, and a high-energy dueling piano show, all in support of homeless pets. Tickets are limited, so don't wait. Get yours now at al-van.org/furball and be part of one of the most anticipated nights of the season.

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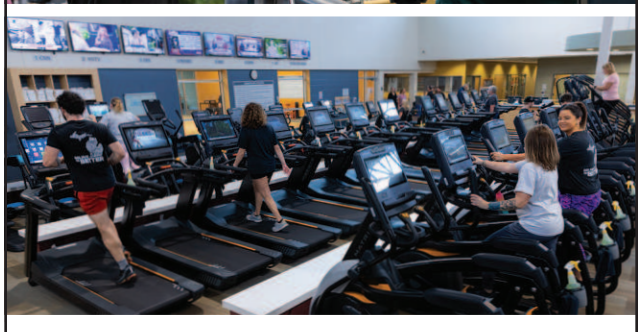

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Al-Van Humane Society to host fur ball fundraiser

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Al-Van Humane Society recently announced their upcoming fundraiser "Fur Ball: Breakfast at Tiffany's."

According to a news release, the event will take place on Feb. 21 at the Black River Barn.

"This glamorous evening includes dinner, cash bar, live and silent auctions and dueling pianos," the release stated. "Guests are encouraged to dress in their finest attire and maybe even add a Breakfast at Tiffany's flair to their look."

Fur Ball is the largest fundraiser for Al-Van Humane Society, which will provide support for shelter operations over the next two years.

Funds raised during the event help provide food, shelter, medical care and other essential resources for the homeless pets of Van Buren and Allegan counties.

In 2025 alone, Al-Van had over 400 animals come through its doors looking for new homes or to be reunited with their owners.

"With such a fun theme this year, we cannot wait to see the community come together to support our animals, "President of Al-Van's Board of Directors Cindy Moreen said in the release."The number of animals coming through our doors continues to grow, and the cost of providing food, shelter and medical care continues to rise. Fur Ball has never been more important to ensure we can provide the best possible care for every animal that comes through our doors."

Every ticket purchased, every auction bid and every drink ordered directly supports the care of animals at Al-Van.

General Admission tickets are $150, with special VIP tables and sponsorships also available.

"Fur Ball 2026: Breakfast at Tiffany's pairs unforgettable entertainment with a clear purpose, giving homeless pets the food, medical treatment and second chances they need," the release stated.

For more information go to al-van.org/furball or call 269-637-5062.

South Haven Speakers Series welcomes new board members

By TRIBUNE STAFF

BROWN

FLACK

SOUTH HAVEN — Kalamazoo Promise Architect Dr. Janice Brown and South Haven City Council Member Dave Flack recently joined the board of the South Haven Speakers Series.

According to a news release, the board also includes Elaine Stephens, Joan Bauer, Dave Murphey, Jim Windell, series founder Bob Copping, Dick Brunvand, Angelica Gallegos-Dickerson and Janice Varney.

Brown is a former Kalamazoo superintendent of schools and considered the architect of the nationally recognized Kalamazoo Promise.

The Kalamazoo Promise is a community-supported foundation that provides up to 100 percent college tuition and expenses for graduates of Kalamazoo Public Schools.

"Dr. Brown continues to serve as chair of the promise and is sought after across the country to share the story of its success – a model now being replicated in communities nationwide," the release stated.

Flack, a Ward 3 city council member, is a retired Ford Motor Company professional. He and his wife moved to South Haven in 2023.

In addition to serving on city council, he is a member of the Harbor Commission and is active in several community organizations.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Michigan State University and an MBA from Western Michigan University.

Stephens has been elected to a second term as president of the Speakers Series. Bauer will be vice president, Murphey is the treasurer, Windell is the secretary and Copping is the chairman.

The 2026 season opens April 30 with a former ambassador discussing the importance of Ukraine and Eastern Europe. It will be followed on May 14 with an astronomer describing how bright lights endanger starry nights and our environment.

The fall series continues on Oct. 22 with an award-winning professor exploring the promises and perils of artificial intelligence. The season concludes on Nov. 19. With a topic that explores the art of getting along in a deeply divided and troubled society by a best-selling writer and journalist.

All presentations are held on the South Haven Campus of Lake Michigan College. Refreshments are available at 6:30 p.m. followed by the speaker at 7 p.m.

Admission is $10 and students attend free of charge.

The South Haven Speakers Series is a nonprofit organization. Approximately three-quarters of the series budget comes from donors.

For more information, go to southhavenspeakerseries.org.

The South Haven Tribune makes every effort to ensure accuracy in its stories. If you believe there is an error, please contact the editor of the page on which it occurred. If you are unsure who to contact, call 269-637-1104 to be directed to the appropriate editor.

Ice Breaker returns to South Haven for 32nd year

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The 32nd Ice Breaker Festival is returning to South Haven to offer winter fun for the whole family.

According to a news release, the winter festival will take place from Jan. 30 to Feb. 1.

The event will feature a variety of activities including: an ice sculpture contest, a Chili Cook-Off, Cardboard Sled Race, Pub Slide, outdoor ice skating, s'mores roasting, Frozen Fish Fling and a Snowsuit Fashion Competition.

"The not-to-be-missed highlight of the festival is the sculpting of more than 40 blocks of ice, each weighing 300-600 pounds, into incredible works of frozen art," the release stated. "Take a stroll downtown to admire the cool designs while enjoying the Pub Slide, featuring food, drinks and entertainment specials at participating bars and restaurants all weekend."

Jan. 31 will feature "Heat the Streets," with fire pits for roasting s'mores and warming up between activities.

The Professional Chili Cook-Off challenges downtown restaurants and bars to compete for the chili trophy and bragging rights.

Visitors can try their hand at the 6th Annual Frozen Fish Fling at the South Marina watch the Cardboard Sled Race.

Teams construct sleds entirely from cardboard and duct tape, then line them up along Phoenix Street for the Cardboard Car Show, where sleds are judged on build, design, creativity and team spirit. After judging, participants race down Coast Guard Hill.

Families can enjoy arts and crafts hosted by local non-profits or glide across the outdoor covered ice rink in downtown South Haven.

"Proceeds from Ice Breaker support local non-profits and their community programs, making the festival fun for everyone while helping the community thrive," the release stated.

For more information, contact the South Haven Area Chamber of Commerce at 269-637-5171, email events@southhavenmi.com, go to www.southhavenmi.com, or follow the chamber on Facebook.

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

The annual Ice Breaker Festival in South Haven features an ice sculpting contest.

One of the unique events of the annual Ice Breaker Festival in South Haven is the Frozen Fish Fling that people of all ages can participate in.

Berrien County admin leaving for new role

Dissette heads to Ottawa County as deputy admin

DISSETTE

By JULIE SWIDWA
Paxton Media Group

ST. JOSEPH — Brian Dissette is leaving his job as Berrien County administrator by the end of the month.

Dissette announced he has accepted an offer to become Ottawa County's next deputy administrator. He will serve under Administrator Patrick Waterman, who formerly served as deputy administrator.

According to a news release issued last week by Ottawa County, Dissette was chosen from a pool of 54 applicants for the position.

"Throughout his career, Brian has led and supported a range of regional collaboration efforts, including the creation of a regional recreation authority, refinements to a regional water and sewer authority, regional police services agreements, and multiple initiatives focused on economic development," Ottawa County's news release stated.

Waterman, expressed high praise for Dissette, saying, "We are thrilled to have Brian join the Ottawa County team. He brings nearly 24 years of local government experience that will serve the residents well."

Dissette has been Berrien County's administrator since 2020. Prior to that, he was the South Haven city manager for nearly 12 years after serving two years as assistant city manager. Before that, he spent four years as Watervliet's city manager.

Dissette announced his departure publicly last Thursday at a Berrien County Board Committee of the Whole meeting.

In a phone interview, Dissette said he had spoken with Board Chairman Mac Elliott and met one-on-one with all elected officials over the past week.

He holds a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in public relations, both from Western Michigan University.

"I've been interested in local government since I was a teenager," Dissette said.

Since early in his career, Dissette said he has admired Ottawa County's commitment to quality governance, innovative service delivery and organizational integrity.

"I look forward to bringing my experience in county leadership, communication, cross-departmental management and strategic planning to Ottawa," he said.

Ottawa County has a population about double that of Berrien County. Estimates in 2024 listed Ottawa's population at 306,235 and Berrien County's population at 152,703.

"This is an opportunity for me to grow in a larger organization," Dissette said. "I've always seen Ottawa County as very distinct in programming and service delivery, and it was always on my radar as an organization I was interested in joining."

He said he values good service more than any job title. He is expected to start in his new role Feb. 2, after his contract is finalized.

He told the county board Thursday that he has very much appreciated the opportunity to serve the county.

"The staff here is phenomenal," he told The Herald-Palladium. "It's a wonderful team, and I'm so impressed with all of them."

He said his wife, Kelly, and their three children have been supportive of his career path.

Contact: jswidwa@thehp.com, Twitter: @HPSwidwa

PHONES

From page A1

during breaks, lunch and recess – for students in younger grades. That language was removed.

Hall said the goal of the change was to make regulations uniform for K-12 students.

Now, he said "kids will still have access to [cell phones] for emergencies, or they can use them outside of the classroom, so I think we found the right balance there."

The bill was initially brought up for a vote in August of last year.

It failed to get enough votes when the Democratic House minority, seizing on a few Republican absences and dissenters, blocked its approval in a 53 to 45 vote. House Democratic leaders said the no vote was over a refusal to negotiate on some changes.

Bills need at least 56 votes to pass.

Tisdel said he worked with legislative Democrats and the governor's office on refining the bill, even including compromises for emergency use. He said the defeat had "nothing to do with the merits of the bill."

He's sponsored the legislation during the last two legislative sessions.

State Sen. Dayna Polehanki, D-Livonia, also introduced a competing plan to limit smartphone usage in the classroom after Whitmer's State of the State Address. Her bill – which passed the Senate in May – required schools to make a smartphone policy but not to completely prohibit smartphone use during class.

Instead, school boards would be required to craft a policy that somehow limits cellphone use during school hours and distractions in classroom settings, which could include a ban on smartphone use during class.

According to House Fiscal analysis, Florida was the first state to ban the use of cell phones during instructional time in 2023. As of January 2025, eight other states have also passed a statewide ban or restriction, though the extent varies.

During a visit to Michigan in 2025, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also asked lawmakers to ban smartphones in classrooms, according to Michigan House Republican officials.

The legislation previously received mixed support from school advocacy groups, with the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals and Michigan Association of School Social Workers in support.

The state Department of Education did not take a position, but the Michigan Association of School Boards opposed the change back in April 2025, as did the Detroit Public Schools Community District.

The Michigan Association of School Boards had not responded to an MLive request for comment as of the time of publishing.

Michigan Works to host job fair

By TRIBUNE STAFF

BENTON HARBOR — Michigan Works will host a job fair that will feature 25 employers looking for candidates to fill their open positions.

According to a news release, the event will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Feb. 10 at the Michigan Works Service Center, located at 499 West Main Street in Benton Harbor.

"The last Michigan Works hiring event brought 20 employers and 192 job seekers together, resulting in many on-the-spot interviews and filled positions," the release stated.

In addition to hosting employers in various industries, the job fair will also host resource providers to help job seekers with education, training and support services. KT's Rasoi Food Truck will also be on site during the event.

Individuals who would like to participate should arrive at the job fair interview ready with an updated resume. Jobseekers are encouraged to pre-register their attendance here and view the growing list of employers who plan to attend.

Employers looking to have a table at the hiring event at no cost should contact Michael Mompremier at MompremierM@miworks.org. Capacity is limited.

For more information or general questions, go to www.miworks.org/events.

Michigan Works of Berrien, Cass, Van Buren specializes in educating, training and employing individuals of all ages.

"We work with local businesses to find out what keeps them up at night and help them tackle the most pressing challenges they may face, including attracting and retaining talent," the release stated.

For more information, go to www.miworks.org.

South Haven Scott Club reveals 2026 program lineup

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Scott Club recently announced the schedule of programs planned for 2026.

According to a news release, they will continue the normal schedule of programs at alternate sites during the construction and installation of the elevator-style lift in the Michigan Historic Site.

The first program, "Intelligence in Action: The Tactical and Strategic Value of Crime Gun Intelligence Centers," will take place on Jan. 20.

This program will be on Zoom only. Members will receive a Zoom Link and non-members may request a link by emailing info@scottclub.org.

Dr. Alaina De Biasi will explain how crime gun intelligence connects the dots between people, places and firearms, with the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network playing a central role in that process. This presentation explains what the network is, how it works and the advantages it brings to investigations.

"We will look at its tactical value in helping investigators advance cases and its strategic value in identifying shooting patterns, focusing enforcement, and preventing future violence," the release stated. "Drawing on case studies from Detroit, Michigan, this presentation will show how ballistic evidence can be transformed into actionable intelligence that supports both immediate and long-term public safety goals."

The next program, "A Century of Black History Commemorations" will take place on Feb. 3 at the First Congregational Church at 651 Phoenix Street. No Zoom.

The members of the Black History Leadership Society have persevered in their efforts to keep black history alive by presenting themed programs each February in celebration of Black History Month.

This year's theme is "2026-A Century of Black History Commemorations".

Each year the Black History Leadership Society chooses an honoree for exemplary community leadership and awards a scholarship to a student through their Youth on the Rise Scholarship.

"Join us to kick-off Black History Month and celebrate the amazing work that the Society does for our community," the release stated.

"A Quilting Journey" will take place on Feb. 17 at the First Congregational Church at 651 Phoenix Street. No Zoom.

Deloa Jones will share her quilting journey that has spanned over 46 years.

"She will tell her story of how her quilting masterpieces have evolved by displaying 20 to 25 quilts that range from her earliest piece to her newest design," the release stated. "Discover the artistry and passion behind every stitch."

On March 3 the program "Remembering Remarkable Michigan Women" will take place at First Congregational Church at 651 Phoenix Street. No Zoom.

In honor of Women's History Month, the Silver Bag Ladies of South Haven's branch of AAUW will share vignettes from the lives of a dozen Michigan ladies during the past two centuries.

"History is told through their hats as well as their words," the release stated. "Attendees are encouraged to wear their own hats in celebration of women's history month."

The program entitled "Celebrate St. Patrick's Day with Music, Celtics and Classics" will take place on March 17 at Senior Services, 08337 M-140, South Haven. No Zoom.

Brian has performed professionally for over 17 years. His show consists of fiddle, guitar, vocals and bodhran drum.

Attendees can enjoy a variety of songs, from Celtic to American classics people know and love.

"What makes Brian stand out is his ability to connect with and energize the audience," the release stated. "One can expect a lively performance that will have you on the edge of your seat."

All programs begin at 1p.m. and are free and open to all.

Photos provided

The Black History Leadership Society will present "2026 – A Century of Black History Month" program on Feb. 3 at First Congregational Church.

ABOVE: In honor of Women's History Month, the Silver Bag Ladies will present the program entitled "Remembering Remarkable Michigan Women" on March 3. **RIGHT:** Deloa Jones will share her quilting journey that has spanned over 46 years on Feb. 17 at First Congregational Church.

Donations pour in for suspended Ford worker who heckled Trump

By SUMMER BALLENTINE and MELISSA NANN BURKE
The Detroit News (TNS)

DETROIT — A Ford Motor Co. worker who heckled Donald Trump, prompting an obscene gesture from the president, during a Detroit-area factory visit on Tuesday, is at the center of a political firestorm over his exchange.

Video first published by TMZ and confirmed as authentic by the White House captures a person at Dearborn Truck yelling "pedophile protector" at Trump, who seemingly mouthed back an expletive and flipped his middle finger in the shouter's direction.

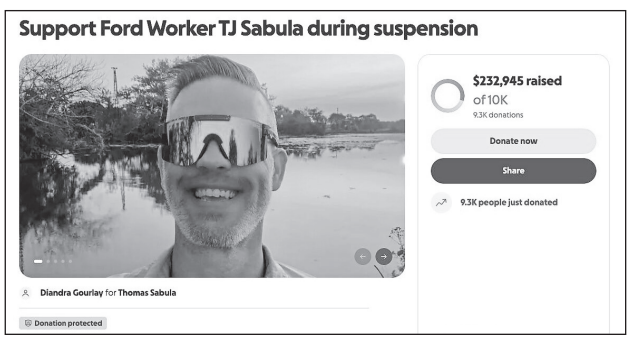
Dearborn Truck plant line worker TJ Sabula told The Washington Post that he was the one who shouted at the president during the tour and said he has no regrets, although he's worried about his job after being suspended with pay following the exchange.

"I don't feel as though fate looks upon you often, and when it does, you better be ready to seize the opportunity," Sabula told the Post. "And today I think I did that."

The brief, heated exchange prompted the White House to describe the heckler as "a lunatic" who "was wildly screaming expletives in a complete fit of rage."

"And the President gave an appropriate and unambiguous response," White House communications director Steven Cheung said in a statement.

More than $530,000 had been raised through two online fundraisers for Sabula – a GoFundMe titled "TJ Sabula is a patriot!! and another headlined Support Ford Worker TJ Sabula during suspension – as of Wednesday afternoon.



GoFundMe screenshot via TNS

One GoFundMe page for TJ Sabula, who was suspended from his job after publicly criticizing President Donald Trump, collected nearly $315,000 by noon Wednesday.

Earlier Wednesday, in a statement, Ford spokesperson Dave Tovar said respect is a core Ford value, "and we don't condone anyone saying anything inappropriate like that within our facilities."

"When that happens, we have a process to deal with it," Tovar said. "But we don't get into specific personnel matters."

The Dearborn automaker's executive chair, Bill Ford, told reporters Tuesday on the floor of the Detroit Auto Show that Sabula's "discipline is in the hands of the organization."

Ford said he was embarrassed by the interaction and that "99 percent of the employees in the plant were great" during the visit by Trump.

"But that was six seconds out of an hour tour, and the tour went great," Ford said. "And I think he really enjoyed it, and we did, too. I understand that that gets a lot of social media play, and that's the world we live in, but it was a very small part of the day."

U.S. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., who said she spoke to Sabula, said after the worker shouted at the president, Trump mouthed to him: "You're fired." Then Ford personnel removed the employee from the floor, Tlaib said.

"Right after that, they walked him out of the plant as if he committed some sort of theft, a crime of some sort," Tlaib said.

Tlaib called Sabula a "hero" for exercising his First Amendment rights and said Ford's response to the episode has been shameful.

"I mean, the right to dissent, the right to use that beautiful First Amendment right to any public elected person needs to be cherished and supported, not demeaned and disrespected by the Ford Motor Company," she said.

Tlaib said she is concerned for the worker's safety now, and added she had expressed her frustrations and worries to Ford, which has responded that it's a personnel issue.

Michigan race for governor starts the year deadlocked, new poll finds

By CRAIG MAUGER
The Detroit News (TNS)

LANSING — Michigan is poised to see its closest race for governor in at least a decade, with both parties starting 2026 neck and neck and independent candidate Mike Duggan gaining ground, according to the first election-year poll commissioned by The Detroit News and WDIV-TV (Channel 4).

The Jan. 2-6 telephone survey of 600 likely general election voters was a mixed bag for Duggan and Michigan Democrats and Republicans, offering some reasons for optimism and clear risks ahead for all sides, about 10 months before Election Day.

In one potential matchup, about 34 percent of participants said they would vote for Republican U.S. Rep. John James of Shelby Township, 32 percent chose Democratic Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson of Detroit and 26 percent backed Duggan, the former mayor of Detroit. The result was within the poll's margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, and 8 percent of participants said they were undecided.

Richard Czuba, founder of the Glengariff Group, the firm that conducted the poll, acknowledged that it is difficult to know how an independent candidate's performance in a survey converted to actual votes in an election because Michigan hasn't had a well-known independent contender before.

"This is clearly going to be a close race," Czuba said of the poll's results. "And it would be a close race with or without Mike Duggan."

David Guralnick / The Detroit News / TNS

Former Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan is within striking distance of the Republican and Democratic gubernatorial front runners in a hypothetical matchup, according to a Jan. 2-6 poll of 600 likely Michigan voters by The Detroit News and WDIV-TV. Duggan also has the highest name recognition in the race, the survey showed.

When Duggan, a longtime Democrat, wasn't included as an option in the new survey, Benson led James, 47-45 percent, still within the margin of error but a 4-point change from the three-candidate version of the race.

Benson and James have to win contested primary elections in August to become their parties' official nominees. Benson, a two-term secretary of state, and James, who has twice previously campaigned for U.S. Senate, are the most well-known major party candidates running for governor.

Richard Young, 83, of Fremont in west Michigan, was among the participants in the poll who said they planned to support James. Young, who was in the Army, highlighted the congressman's character and his service in the military.

"It's definitely time for a change," Young said of Michigan's current Democratic leadership.

But the silver lining in the poll for Michigan Democrats might be the fact that enthusiasm appears to be on their side.

Before the 2024 presidential election, which Republican Donald Trump won, those who identified themselves as "strong" Republicans and "strong" Democrats reported being similarly motivated to cast ballots. In January 2024, 88 percent of strong Republicans said they would definitely vote in November, and 88 percent of strong Democrats said they would definitely vote.

This January, however, 87 percent of strong Democrats said they would definitely vote, while 72 percent of strong Republicans said they would definitely vote, a 16-point drop.

"That is a huge red flag on the Republican side," Czuba said. "They have a lot of voters who are not motivated to vote."

Among voters who said they definitely plan to cast ballots this fall, Benson led James, 35 percent to 31 percent, with Duggan's support remaining largely unchanged at 26 percent, according to the Detroit News-WDIV poll.

The poll included a sample of 40.6 percent of voters who identify as Democrats, 40.3 percent Republicans and 18.2 percent independents.

HOMEBUYERS

From page A1

thing of the past, Servatius said.

He said it's no longer an option for somebody getting out of college or turning 18 to buy a $100,000 home.

"Even if you go to smaller, more rural communities – in the middle of nowhere – you're going to pay over $250,000 and you're looking at double wides," he said.

When looking for a house in South Haven, Servatius said it's now difficult to find one that is under $400,000.

"You get to the townships, you got a couple neighborhoods out there where you can still get something into 400 and under," Servatius said. "They're all about 20 years old, which is good, they're still in decent shape, but now you're looking at the roofs aging, your windows, you want to check the seals on that and just normal maintenance in your HVAC system."

Even if a homebuyer finds a house that fits their needs, getting a loan to purchase it can be a struggle as well.

"It's very hard for a first-time homebuyer right now," Servatius said. "There are some great programs out there for some lenders that do down payment assistance, but a lot of that is first come, first serve. If you're not in line, use it by March or April, those funds are gone for the year."

To find something affordable, Landis said homebuyers have to look at their budget and lifestyle choices.

"Affordability, it breaks down to lifestyle choices too," Landis said. "If you're not wanting to save, if you're looking at your home as your retirement ... that's one financial outlook. I would encourage people to do their own research and investments."

Servatius said the best thing to do as a first-time buyer is to crunch the numbers and stay out of debt.

"Make sure those numbers work for you because you're buying a home. Yes, I have equity, but it takes years – if not decades – to earn equity that's worth it," Servatius said. "The biggest thing too is stay out of debt; pay down as much debt as you can, leave the credit cards alone (and) do not buy a new vehicle."

Provided photo

Lacie Strunk of Watervliet and her fiancé, Camron Preciado of Coloma, are pictured in the Benton Township house they bought on Dec. 24, showing the keys to the house. "We loved it and put in an offer the next day," Strunk said.

Coming down the line

No one understands the struggle of housing availability like St. Joseph City Commissioner Tess Ulrey, who rents a two-bedroom house for her four-person family.

Ulrey said she represents a very real demographic which can be overlooked in Berrien County, where homeownership is the focus.

"I've learned especially when I'm having policy conversations, it's important to be vocal about the fact that I'm a renter because there's a perception of renters ... maybe they'll be hard on a building or they'll be messy or dirty. But even beyond that, I think there's a perception sometimes when we have larger housing conversations that renters are not part of the community. And that's really not the case."

Ulrey has never owned a home, but is interested in finding one in St. Joseph, because she serves as a commissioner and her two daughters go to school in the district. She said she's still renting a house for financial reasons as well as the state of the housing market.

"Right now, I would love to own a home in the city of St. Joseph, and that's very, very hard to do," she said. "I would love to own a home, (but) I don't know if that's realistic."

The rising cost of living, and the fact that wages haven't also increased has been a common through line, she said.

With a lack of available housing inventory in St. Joseph, home prices have increased with the demand. Ulrey said she knows plenty of others in the same position – who are now in their 30s, renting, and struggling to find a house to purchase in their community.

"I think that a lot of us want to live in St. Joseph and we're contributing members of St. Joseph. We just happen to not own property in the city," she said. "... For me, when I ran for city commission and became incredibly politically involved and vocal about renting, I was a single parent. That absolutely impacted my ability to purchase a home, too. There's a financial reality of being a single mom of two. But I still felt like I wanted to contribute to St. Joe, and that's kind of why I ran."

As an elected official, Ulrey said she has advocated for housing projects to include units priced for the area median income (AMI), such as The Marquette.

"It's not necessarily like HUD housing or low-income housing, but it is housing based on that area median income that more accurately represents what people – to be frank, people in my demographic – are in," she said. "It's been important to me, as we consider these new developments, that AMI housing is central to that."

When housing projects apply for a brownfield plan, they are eligible to be reimbursed for the profit gap on units they price for AMI rather than market value.

"I think there's a big misunderstanding of what that is and just to be frank, I've seen some people have sticker shock about it, too," she said. "They look at it and they say 'who's paying this much to rent?' And those are good rent prices. There's a bit of a disconnect sometimes. Not from any ill intent or anything, but I think some people who have owned their houses for a while are truly shocked to understand how much people pay for rent."

One point of confusion, Ulrey said, is that the city is simultaneously declining in population and experiencing a housing shortage. She said it's because as people age, the way they use their homes changes.

"When our population is aging, there may be a house on State Street with four bedrooms, and maybe at one point that was full of a family of a couple adults and a couple kids, but now there's one or maybe two adults living there," she said. "The more our age demographic shifts, so does our housing use."

Even with additional housing options being added over time, it won't help renters find dream houses immediately.

"We've got nothing for sale, and nothing for rent, which is why I'm excited to have some more of these developments coming down the line," Ulrey said. "It's not going to help me next year, it's not going to help me find a three-bedroom before my older daughter is in eighth grade. But especially in government, we make decisions for down the line. I'm excited for, down the line, it will be easier for someone else."

A tight market

Lacie Strunk of Watervliet and her fiance, Camron Preciado of Coloma, closed on their first home in Benton Township on Christmas Eve.

"We actually weren't even really looking," Strunk said. "We looked at one other house a few weeks ago. ... We loved it and put in an offer the next day."

The house they ended up buying was having an open house and they decided to check it out.

Strunk said the house, which had been on the market only three days, already had four other offers on it.

She said they both are living with their parents until they get married next summer, so they weren't paying rent. Meanwhile, she said they are making improvements to the house.

"It definitely is move-in ready, but there were a few things we wanted to do before moving things in," she said.

Luke Siewert bought his first house in Buchanan last August after looking for 18 months.

"It definitely is a tight market right now," said Siewert, a 2017 graduate of Lakeshore High School.

He said his desire to buy a home was driven by how expensive rent had become in the area. Siewert said he also decided to buy a home so his money could build equity for himself and not for someone else.

"Renting always felt like I was just throwing my money away," he said.

However, his search for a home took so long because he had difficulty finding a place he could afford that wasn't on the brink of being condemned.

When he found the house he wanted, Siewert said there were already several other offers on the table.

"Immediately, I was stepping into a bidding war," he said. Siewert ended up increasing his offer by $5,000 so he could get the house.

Josh Frazee, a real estate broker with Century 21 in St. Joseph, said even though there's been speculation that interest rates are going to go down in the near future, people may want to buy a home before that happens.

He said that's because it's already a seller's market due to the lack of inventory.

"Home prices have gone up quite a bit, especially since COVID," Frazee said. "... If interest rates go down, with how much buyer demand there is and how few listings there are, the prices are going to go higher. So you're going to pay more for a house, but have a lower interest rate."

Instead, he said people may want to buy a house now and refinance it at a lower interest rate later.

"In 2020, when interest rates went from 4-5 percent down to 2-3 percent, it was a frenzy – a free-for-all," he said. "A lot of times, we would see 10 offers on one house and the home would sell 10-12 percent higher than the asking price."

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

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METZGER

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Paw Paw, MI 49079
Court telephone no.
269-657-8225

Estate of Thad Robert Earl
Date of birth: 06/15/1956

TO ALL CREDITORS: **

NOTICE TO CREDITORS:
The decedent, Thad Robert Earl, died 12/01/2025. Creditors of the decedent are notified that all claims against the estate will be forever barred unless presented to Jeremiah Wood, personal representative, or to both the probate court at 212 E. Paw Paw St., Paw Paw and the personal representative within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice.

January 12, 2026
Date

Albert W. Laaksonen II P43920
Attorney **Bar no.**
226 1/2 E. Michigan Ave
Address
Paw Paw, MI 49079
City, State, Zip
269-655-1035
Telephone

Jeremiah Wood
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CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
PLANNING COMMISSION

On Thursday, February 5, 2026, the Planning Commission for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the following request(s). The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 P.M. at City Hall, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven concerning the following:

1. Special Land Use Application – 212 Elkenburg Street

Mr. Brett Kucej has submitted a special land use application to use the dwelling unit located at 212 Elkenburg Street in the City of South Haven as a short-term rental. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-245-002-00.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Thursday, February 5, 2026. Written comments should be addressed to the Planning Commission and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the Planning Commission and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the City Clerk no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0750, or at mkiker@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette, Zoning Administrator
(269) 637-0760 kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

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SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1 to 4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays through May 26, 2026.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: "Over and Under the Snow" by Kate Messner and Christopher Silas Neal StoryWalk available from Jan. 1 to Feb. 28. Call to schedule an appointment.

Lakeside Social Bowling Alley: Glow Bowl every Friday from noon to 9 p.m.

Bridge: Chicago Scoring at 1 p.m. on Tuesdays at Lakeside Social, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Bridge: Duplicate Scoring at 1 p.m. on Wednesdays at Lakeside Social, 9921 Blue Star Memorial Highway, South Haven.

Michigan Maritime Museum: free admission on the first Sunday of every month from November through April.

First United Methodist Church: Free meals every Tuesday night. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Meal is served at 6 p.m.

January

18 – First Congregation UCC: Winter Concert Series featuring Edye and Mike at 3 p.m.

19 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

20 – Rotary Club: Evening meeting at the American Legion beginning at 530p. Todd Marcy to present on the Detroit Lions app.

20 – Basketball: Boys freshman basketball against Hastings High School at 4 p.m.

20 – Basketball: Girls middle school basketball against Saugatuck High School at 5 p.m.

20 – Basketball: Boys junior varsity basketball against Black River Public School at 5:30 p.m.

20 – Basketball: Boys varsity basketball against Black River Public School at 7 p.m.

20 – Swimming: Boys varsity swimming against Allegan Public School at 6 p.m.

20 – Scott Club: "Intelligence in Action: The Tactile and Strategic Value of Crime Gun Intelligence Centers" zoom program at 1 p.m.

21 – Wrestling: Boys and Girls varsity wrestling at 6 p.m.

22 – Basketball: Boys freshman basketball against Watervliet High School at 4 p.m.

22 – Basketball: Girls junior varsity basketball against Watervliet High School at 5:30 p.m.

22 – Basketball: Boys junior varsity basketball against Watervliet High School at 7 p.m.

22 – Bowling: Boys and girls varsity bowling against Parchment High School at 4 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: South Haven Writers read-around from 1 to 4 p.m. New writers welcome.

23 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Lantern Walk starting at 4:30 p.m. Join us for a fun night decorating lanterns, eating cookies and other treats and walking our woodland paths at night using your freshly made lantern. This event is for all ages, materials and refreshments will be provided.

24 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club for kids starting at 11 a.m.

26 – Covert Branch Library: After school art workshop for grades 6 to 12 from 3 to 5 p.m.

27 – Rotary Club: Morning meeting. Mike Sawyer to present on the Van Buren County Senior Services Ramp program.

27 – Wrestling: Boys and girls varsity wrestling at 6 p.m.

28 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

28 – Basketball: Girls middle school basketball against Black River Public School at 4 p.m.

28 – Basketball: Girls freshman basketball against Zeeland West High School at 4 p.m.

28 – Basketball: Girls junior varsity basketball against Zeeland West High School at 5:30 p.m.

28 – Basketball: Girls varsity basketball against Zeeland West High School at 7 p.m.

28 – Bowling: Boys and girls bowling against Martin Public School at 4 p.m.

29 – Basketball: Girls middle school basketball against Lakeshore High School at 5:30 p.m. All-area tournament.

30 – Basketball: Girls varsity basketball against Coloma High School: 6 p.m.

30 – Basketball: Boys varsity basketball against Coloma High School: 7:30 p.m.

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FOCUS

The U.S. used to be really dirty – environmental cleanup laws have made a huge difference

By JAMES SALZMAN
University of California (The Conversation)

Growing up in the 1970s, I took for granted the trash piles along the highway, tires washed up on beaches, and smog fouling city air. The famed "Crying Indian" commercial of 1971 became a symbol of widespread environmental damage across the United States.

That's why the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970, energized the nation. In the largest single-day public demonstration in U.S. history, roughly 10 percent of the population took to the streets to shout together: "Enough is enough!"

Republican and Democratic politicians alike listened. Over the decade that followed, all the nation's foundational environmental laws were passed with strong bipartisan support – the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act and more.

These laws are taking a beating at the moment, including from the Environmental Protection Agency – the federal government agency created in 1970 to protect the environment. The agency's own leader, Lee Zeldin, boasted of "driving a dagger straight into the heart" of environmental regulations. President Donald Trump regularly derides environmental laws as job killers and government overreach.

But the conditions that made these laws necessary have largely been forgotten. This environmental amnesia allows critics to focus entirely on costs while ignoring the laws' very real benefits and achievements.

I'm an environmental law professor, so I was excited to learn recently about the Documerica project, courtesy of a wonderful article by writer Gideon Leek. It shows in clear photographic evidence how dirty the U.S. used to be and wakes people up to how much better the environment is today.

An inspired origin

Environmental protection was a bipartisan effort in the 1970s: The EPA was created by President Richard Nixon, a Republican. The agency's first leader was Bill Ruckelshaus, a Republican congressman from Indiana.

Inspired by the famous photographs of Depression-era farmworkers commissioned in the 1930s by the Farm Security Administration, Ruckelshaus' newly created EPA commissioned a nationwide photo record. The goal, as Leek put it, was to "provide the EPA with a great deal of qualitative environmental data, create a 'visual baseline' against which to judge their efforts, and introduce the agency to the country through art."

In its few short years of operation, from 1972 through 1978, the Documerica project produced over 20,000 photographs of rivers and farms, highways and city streets. The photos provide a vivid window into the state of the U.S. environment in the 1970s. Now, looking back, they highlight the progress made in the decades since, a demonstration of environmental laws' successes far more powerful than graphs and statistics.

Frank J. Aleksandrowicz / Documerica Project / National Archives

TOP: The Cleveland skyline shrouded in smog on a pollution alert day on July 20, 1973. **ABOVE:** This March 1973 photo shows the Statue of Liberty framed by a landfill area.

Solid waste

As a kid, every Sunday my father and I would load the back of our station wagon with trash barrels and drive to the town dump – literally a hole in the ground. My dad would back up to the edge of the pit, and I would enthusiastically run out for what we called "The Olympic Trash Throw!" pouring the barrels' contents down to where a bulldozer rumbled back and forth, compacting the trash while gulls circled overhead.

To say America's landscape was littered in the 1970s is not merely poetic phrasing. Waste disposal was a matter of local law, and illegal dumping was commonplace. Drums of pesticides and chemicals could be sent to the local dump along with tires and just about anything else people and companies wanted to get rid of. When the dump was full, it was covered with topsoil and became open land, ready for recreation or building construction.

One place where this happened was Love Canal, a neighborhood near Niagara Falls, New York. A dump holding decades of chemical drums from the Hooker Chemical Co. was lightly covered and sold to the town for just $1. The town was grateful. A neighborhood was built on the land.

Only when people noticed high levels of miscarriages and cancer clusters among the residents – and saw oozing waste – did opinion change.

In 1976, Congress passed the Resource Conservation Recovery Act, which was the first law that tracked waste materials from their creation to their disposal and set tough standards for how to dispose of them. But by then, decades of unregulated waste disposal had contaminated sites all over the country. The contaminants, toxicity and people responsible were often unknown.

Four years later, the 1980 law known as "Superfund" set standards and assigned financial responsibility for cleaning up hazardous waste sites. The law created a multibillion-dollar fund that could pay for the cleanups and required potentially responsible parties to reimburse the government or clean up the sites on their own.

THE CONVERSATION

Faced with requirements to track their waste and heavy fines if the disposal resulted in hazardous sites, companies paid much more careful attention to their waste disposal. No one wanted to pay for cleaning up a Superfund site.

Water pollution

I had the misfortune in 1978 to capsize while sailing a boat on the Charles River in Boston. My shame turned to a dermatologist's visit when I broke out in rashes the next day. You fell in the Charles at your peril.

Environmental advocates weren't kidding when, in the 1960s and 1970s, they declared "Lake Erie is a dead lake" because of all the industrial pollution pouring into its waters. An oil slick on Cleveland's Cuyahoga River famously caught fire in 1969, but it was actually the 12th time the river had burned in a century.

Just as with dumps on land, all kinds of waste was being disposed of in rivers, lakes and harbors. There was a federal law in place, but it was ineffective and relied on states to set limits and enforce them.

The Clean Water Act of 1972 sought to create a national standard, requiring companies that wanted to discharge waste into waterways to get a federal permit and use the best available technology to reduce the amount and toxicity of what they did dump. The act also provided billions of taxpayer dollars to upgrade sewage treatment plants so they didn't just dump untreated sewage into the water.

The ambitious goal was to end water pollution entirely and make all of the nation's waters safe for swimming and fishing within a decade. Those aspirational goals for the country's waters still have not been fully met, though Ruckelshaus used to quip that at least they are not flammable.

Even more telling, the Charles River and other urban rivers that people avoided in the 1970s now boast all manner of recreation, with little or no risk of rashes even while swimming.

Air pollution

Perhaps the most obvious improvement since the 1970s has been in air quality around the U.S.

The horrible smog around Los Angeles is well known. But many other cities were blanketed in polluted air that led to respiratory illnesses and millions of early deaths across the nation over the decades. In Pittsburgh it was only half-jokingly said that you had to floss your teeth after breathing.

The Clean Air Act of 1970 was the first law to require the EPA to set uniform nationwide standards for air quality to protect the air people breathe. In short order, lead was phased out of gasoline, catalytic converters were required on cars, acid rain was ended, and the sources of smog were stringently regulated. An EPA study found that the benefits under the law exceeded costs by a factor of more than 30 to 1 and in 2020 alone prevented over 230,000 early deaths.

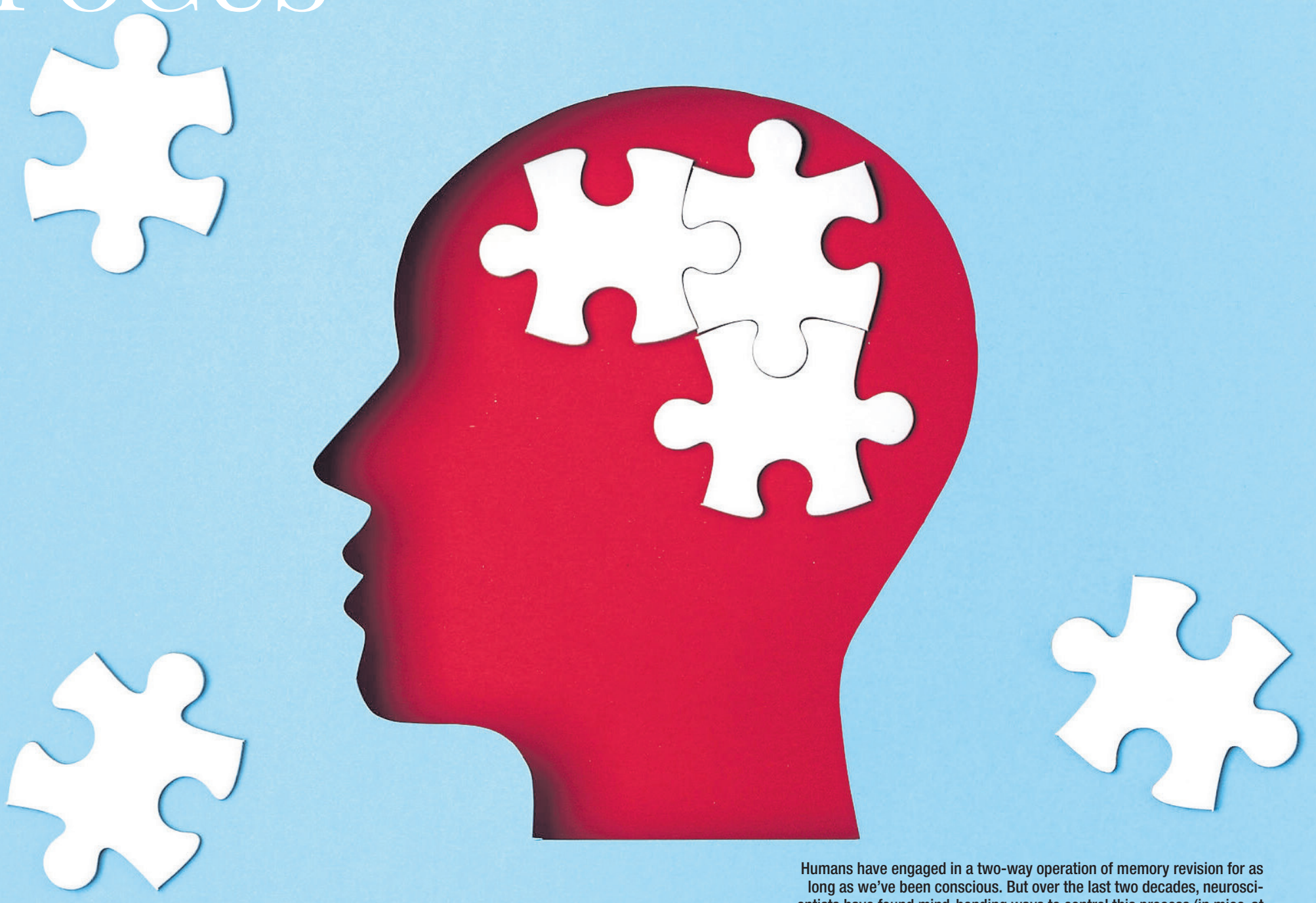
I could go on with photos and stories about laws from the 1970s that protected wetlands, conserved open space, reduced pesticide use, increased recycling and made many other changes to how Americans treat our lands and waters.

But it all boils down to two simple facts. First, with the exception of greenhouse gases, which have been effectively unregulated, every major measure of environmental health has improved significantly over the past five decades. And second, those improvements all occurred during times of strong economic growth, with inflation-adjusted gross domestic product increasing fivefold.

Calling these laws "job killers" misses the point entirely. They created jobs and stopped environmental killers. The laws now being demonized are the very reason the Documerica photos are images of the past, not the present. Environmental laws and regulations have their costs, to be sure, but these photographs still hold visceral power: They show just how far the nation has come and what is at risk if we forget.

James Salzman is a professor of environmental law at the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management, University of California, Santa Barbara, and at the University of California, Los Angeles.

FOCUS



Humans have engaged in a two-way operation of memory revision for as long as we've been conscious. But over the last two decades, neuroscientists have found mind-bending ways to control this process (in mice, at least): implanting false memories, deleting real ones, resurrecting memories thought lost to brain damage, detaching the memory of an emotional reaction to one event and attaching it to the memory of another.

Dreamstime / TNS

'Memory manipulation is inevitable'

How rewriting memory in the lab might one day heal humans

By CORINNE PURTILL
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — We often think of memories like the contents of a museum: static exhibits that we view to understand the present and prepare for the future.

The latest research, however, suggests they are more like well-thumbed library books that wear and change a little bit every time they're pulled off the shelf.

Think of one of your happiest memories. For real. Sit with the recollection. Let your mind's eye wander around the scene. See if you can feel a spark of the joy or hope you felt at the time. Let a minute pass. Maybe two.

If you played along with this experiment, you are physically different now than you were a few minutes ago.

When you began to reminisce, brain cells dormant just seconds before began firing chemicals at one another. That action triggered regions of your brain involved in processing emotions, which is why you may have re-experienced some feelings you did at the time of the event.

Chemical and electrical signals shot out to the rest of your body. If you were stressed before you began this exercise, your heart rate probably slowed and stabilized as levels of cortisol and other stress hormones decreased in your blood. If you were already calm, your heart rate may have quickened with excitement.

In either case, regions of the brain that light up when you get a reward jittered with dopamine.

The memory changed you. But by pulling this memory to mind, neuroscientist Steve Ramirez says, you also changed the memory.

Some elements of the memory heightened in importance. Others receded. Your brain snipped out and inserted details without your conscious knowledge. The mood you were in at the time of reminiscence left emotional fingerprints on the memory, as neurons activated by your mental environment synced up with those activated by the recollection.

Every time you revisit this heartwarming scene you change it a little bit, both as a subjective experience and a physical network of cells.

Humans have engaged in this two-way operation of memory revision for as long as we've been conscious. But over the last two decades, neuroscientists have found mind-bending ways to control this process (in mice, at least): implanting false memories, deleting real ones, resurrecting memories thought lost to brain damage, detaching the memory of an emotional reaction to one event and attaching it to the memory of another.

"It is all part of a larger revolution brewing in science to make memory manipulation a commonplace practice in the lab," Ramirez writes in his recent book, "How to Change a Memory: One Neuroscientist's Quest to Alter the Past" (Princeton University Press). "A memory may transform me entirely, but I have the power to transform it as well – both with my mind and with my science."

In movies about stuff like this, there's often a sinister air around the memory-tweaking scientist character. Ramirez, a Boston University professor, is friendly, earnest and keeps a giant inflatable T-rex named Henry in his office.

He sees this research not as the next frontier of coercive mind control but as another way to alleviate mental suffering, alongside medications and cognitive therapies.

"It's amazing that we can do these things in contemporary neuroscience," Ramirez said recently from his lab in Boston. "But the real-life, overarching goal of all of this is to restore health and well-being to an organism. ... Memory manipulation is another antidote [that] can be part of our toolkit in the clinic."

■■■

Memory is the reason Ramirez exists at all.

His father was once kidnapped at gunpoint by soldiers in his native El Salvador and falsely accused of being a left-wing guerrilla. (Their "evidence": He had a beard.) He was spared execution when one of his captors took a second look at his face and recognized him as the generous schoolmate who used to share his lunch.

Both of Ramirez's parents emigrated to the U.S. before his birth, and raised him and his older siblings in Boston. Ramirez got a bachelor's in neuroscience from Boston University in 2010 and his doctorate from MIT in 2017. As a graduate student he joined the lab of Nobel laureate Susumu Tonegawa, where he was paired with a postdoc fellow named Xu Liu.

Both Ramirez and Liu were drawn to the study of memory as a possible therapeutic tool, and instantly hit it off as friends and lab partners.

Their first major breakthrough together came in 2012.

Three years earlier, a University of Toronto team identified the neurons that lit up when a mouse was exposed to a scary stimulus – in this case, a sound that earlier accompanied a shock. The Toronto researchers then injected the mice with a toxin that killed only those brain cells that lit up when they heard the sound.

The result: The treated mice no longer demonstrated a fear response when the sound was played. Essentially, the scientists had erased a specific memory.

If a memory could be deleted in the lab, Ramirez and Liu reasoned, one could be implanted.

For their experiment, the pair identified brain cells in a mouse hippocampus that activated when the animal received a startling shock. Then they took the mouse out of the enclosure where the shock occurred and placed it in a new box with no sights or other sensory cues associated with the memory of its old environment. Next, using millisecond-long pulses of light, they activated those same brain cells – without the physical shock of the earlier stimulus.

The mouse acted exactly as it had when the shock happened, even though no shock occurred.

You can't interview a mouse about its memories. Researchers base their conclusions on the animal's behavior. And in this case, it appeared that they'd turned a memory on.

"It just blew everyone away," said Sheena Josselyn, a University of Toronto neuroscientist who led the 2009 work on erasing fear memories. "When you can do those sorts of things to memories, you know you have found the neural basis of a memory."

In 2013, Ramirez and Liu set a mouse loose in a box – let's call it, as Ramirez does in his book, Box A – and took note of the brain cells that activated as it explored the environment.

They then scooped it up and placed it in a second box, Box B. With minuscule pulses of light, they reactivated the cells that lit up in Box A, triggering a memory of that earlier environment as it explored the new one. At the same time, they gave the mouse a shock.

When they put the mouse back in Box A, a place where it had never been harmed, it froze in fear.

The mouse's negative memory of being shocked in Box B had, essentially, been remapped to what was previously a neutral memory of Box A. The scientists had created a false memory, another seminal feat.

For their final project together, they put a mouse in an enclosure with other mice and took note of the neurons that fired as it responded positively to the social interaction.

Then they moved that mouse to a smaller cage than usual, where it was alone.

At first, this rodent equivalent of downsizing dimmed the mouse's mood.

Given the choice between plain and sugary water, healthy mice prefer the latter. But when stressed or depressed, mice show no preference. That's how Ramirez and Liu's lonely mouse acted initially.

But when the scientists activated neurons associated with the memory of hanging out with other mice, the mouse's behavior suddenly changed. It enthusiastically slurped the sweet water. Remembering better times had changed its behavior to resemble that of a healthy mouse.

The paper was published in 2015 in the prestigious journal Nature. But unlike their past shared achievements, this one couldn't be celebrated together. As it was going through the review process, Liu died suddenly at the age of 37.

Grief, Ramirez writes, is not so different from memory: "Both endure across the entire lifespan, forever changing us, helping us to decide what matters most."

■■■

Ramirez, now 37, opened his own lab at Boston University in 2017. In the years since, memory researchers have made impressive strides: restoring memories lost to amnesia, activating a memory while suppressing the emotions attached to it, detaching the emotional reaction to one memory and attaching it to another. The tools now exist to erase whole events and corresponding emotions from mouse brains, or to artificially jumpstart memories and all the feelings that go with them.

But there is no expectation in the research community that laser-wielding doctors will one day artificially reshape human patients' memories.

For one, these experiments are possible only with mice that have been genetically modified to have brain cells that light up when exposed to lasers. Genetically altering a human in this manner, researchers interviewed for this story said, is neither ethical nor practical.

It's also not necessary.

"We don't need to generate technophobic fears of a digital future where our memories will be distorted – our memories can already be distorted very effectively by nondigital means," memory scientists Ciara Greene and Gillian Murphy wrote in "Memory Lane: The Perfectly Imperfect Ways We Remember," published in 2025.

Humans are suggestible creatures with extremely pliable memories. Armed with little more than a few leading questions, researchers have found that most humans can be easily manipulated into believing that they did or saw something they didn't. We don't need lasers to activate our memories, which can be summoned at will or triggered by any number of sensory cues, or to edit their contents, which our brains do constantly without any conscious input from us.

The real goal of research like his, Ramirez said, is to establish the biological mechanisms of memory and apply that knowledge to noninvasive therapies.

If researchers understand exactly how to retrieve a memory from a mouse hippocampus that brain damage has rendered inaccessible, for example, that information could be the basis for a drug that helps preserve or strengthen certain types of memory in people suffering from dementia or other cognitive disorders.

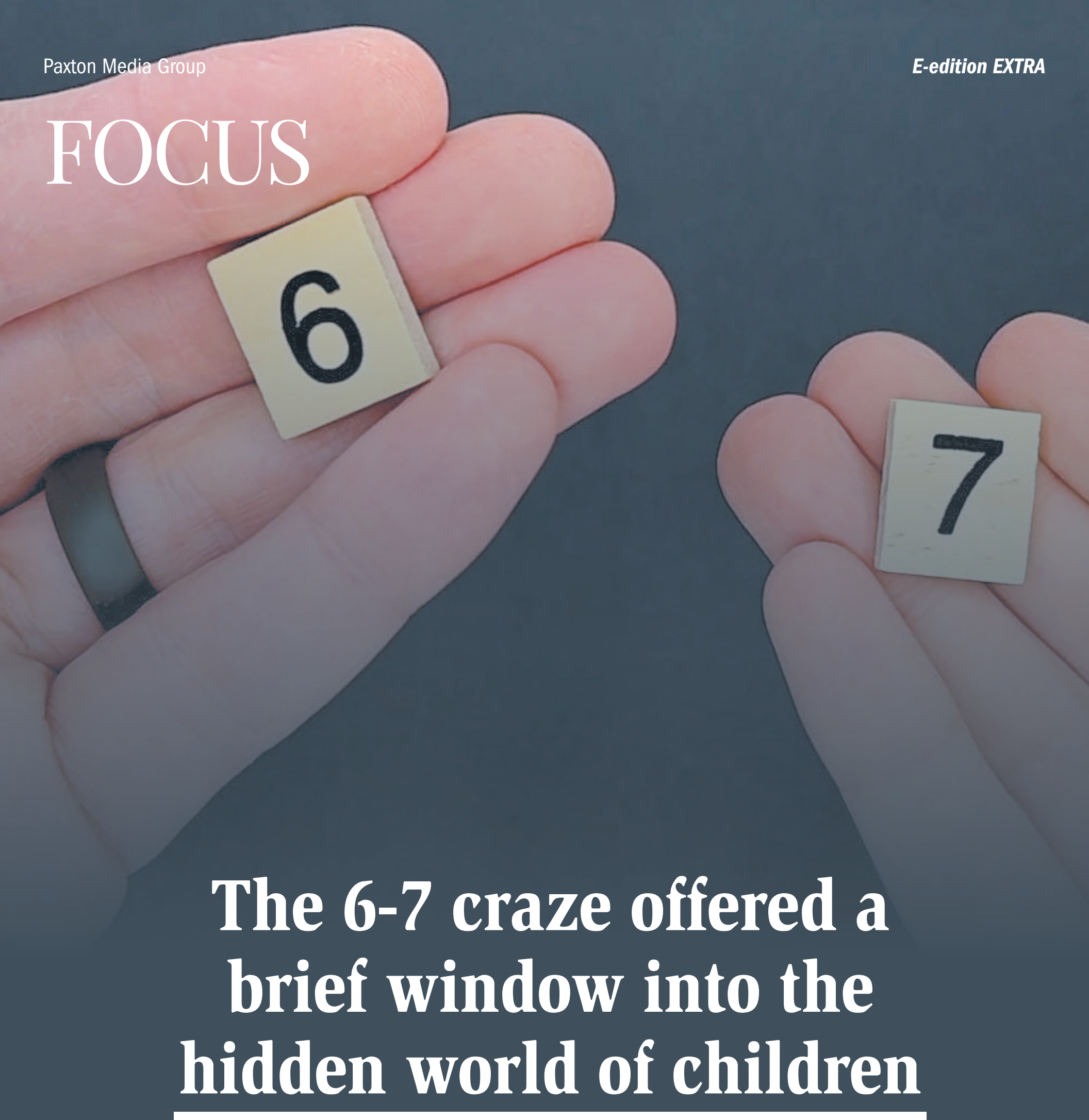
Understanding how an animal brain encodes memories and the emotional responses they evoke could lead to better cognitive therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder.

The obvious dark side of this line of research is that someone who understands how to boost well-being through memory manipulation could just as easily use the same knowledge for pernicious ends.

"The idea of artificially changing our own memories might elicit uneasy feelings of a dystopic future where relationships are erased, identities are replaced, and governmental powers implant thoughts in our heads to mind-control society," Ramirez writes in his book. But, he said, any tool in existence can be used to harm or help, and he'd rather make well-intended progress than none at all.

"The idea of memory manipulation, to me, makes sense if we have an ethically bounded goal, and that ethically bounded goal is to restore health and nourish human well being," he said. "Exercise is an antidote for the brain, and social enrichment is an antidote [and] a good night's sleep is an antidote. What if toggling with memories in a therapeutic manner can also be an antidote? Then we're in business."

FOCUS



The 6-7 craze offered a brief window into the hidden world of children

By REBEKAH WILLETT
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(The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

Many adults are breathing a sigh of relief as the 6-7 meme fades away as one of the biggest kid-led global fads of 2025.

In case you managed to miss it, 6-7 is a slang term – spoken aloud as "six seven" – accompanied by an arm gesture that mimics someone weighing something in their hands.

It has no real meaning, but it spawned countless videos across various platforms and infiltrated schools and homes across the globe. Shouts of "6-7" disrupted classrooms and rained down at sporting events. Think pieces proliferated.

For the most part, adults responded with mild annoyance and confusion.

But as media scholarswho study-children's culture, we didn't view the meme with bewilderment or exasperation. Instead, we thought back to our own childhoods on three different continents – and all the secret languages we spoke.

There was Pig Latin. The cool "S" doodled on countless worksheets and bathroom stalls. Forming an L-shape with our thumb and index finger to insult someone. Remixing the words of hand-clapping games from previous generations.

6-7 is only the latest example of these long-standing practices – and though the gesture might not mean much to adults, it says a lot about children's play, their social lives and their desire for power.

The irresistible allure of 6-7

You can see this longing for power in classic play like spying on adults and in games like "king of the hill."

A typical school day involves a tight schedule of adult-directed activities; kids have little time or space for agency.

But during those in-between times when children are able to stealthily evade adult surveillance – on playgrounds, on the internet and even when stuck at home during the pandemic – children's culture can thrive. In these spaces, they can make the rules. They set the terms. And if it confuses adults, all the better.

As 6-7 went viral, teachers complained that random outbursts by their students were interrupting their lessons. Some started avoiding asking any kind of question that might result in an answer of 67. The trend migrated from schools to sports arenas and restaurants: In-N-Out Burger ended up banning the number 67 from their ticket ordering system.

The meaninglessness of 6-7 made it easy to create a sense of inclusion and exclusion – and to annoy adults, who strained to decipher hidden meanings. In the U.S., siblings and friends dressed as the numbers 6-7 for Halloween. And in Australia, it was rumored that houses with 6-7 in their address were going for astronomical prices.

Remixing games and rhymes

Since before World War I, historians have documented children's use of secret languages like "back slang," which happens when words are phonetically spoken backwards. And nonsense words and phrases have long proliferated in children's culture: Recent examples include "booyah," "skibidi" and "talk to the hand."

6-7 also coincides with a long history of children revising, adapting and remixing games and rhymes.

For example, in our three countries – the U.S., Australia and South Korea – we've encountered endless variations of the game of "tag." Sometimes the chasers pretend to be the dementors from Harry Potter. Other times the chasers have pretended to be the COVID-19 virus. Or we'll see them incorporate their immediate surroundings, like designating playground equipment as "home" or "safe."

Similar games can spread among children around the world. In South Korea, "Mugunghwa kkochi pieotseumnida" – which roughly translates to "The rose of Sharon has bloomed," a reference to South Korea's national flower – is similar to the game "Red Light, Green Light" in English-speaking countries. In the game "Hwang-ma!," South Korean children in the early aughts shouted the word and playfully struck a peer upon seeing a rare, gold-colored car, a game similar to "Punch Buggy" and "Slug Bug" in the U.S. and Australia.

Historically, children have reworked rhymes and clapping games to draw on popular culture of the day. "Georgie Best, Superstar," sung to the tune of "Jesus Christ Superstar," was a popular chant on U.K. playgrounds in the 1970s that celebrated the legendary soccer player George Best. And a variation of the clapping game "I went to a Chinese Restaurant" included the lyrics "My name is, Elvis Presley, girls are sexy, Sitting on the back seat, drinking Pepsi."

Making space for children's culture

One reason 6-7 became so popular is the low barrier to entry: Saying "6-7" and doing the accompanying hand movement is easy to pick up and translate into different cultural contexts. The simplicity of the meme allowed young Korean children to repeat the phrase in English. And deaf children have participated by signing the meme.

Because the social worlds of children now exist across a range of online spaces, 6-7 has been able to seamlessly spread and evolve. On the gaming platform Roblox, for example, children can create avatars that resemble 6-7 and play games that feature the numbers.

The strange words, nonsensical games and creative play of your childhood might seem ridiculous today. But there's real value in these hidden worlds.

With or without access to the internet, children will continue to transform language and games to suit their needs – which, yes, includes getting under the skin of adults.

A great deal of attention is given to the omnipresence of digital technologies in children's lives, but we think it's worth taking a moment to appreciate the way children are using these technologies to innovate and connect in ways both creative and mundane.

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Matthew Fowler / Getty Images

HEALTH

Get to know your **microbiome** *It can improve gut health and more*

Your gut microbiome performs important jobs, including breaking down fiber and starches; synthesizing vitamins and amino acids, such as vitamins B and K; and producing short-chain fatty acids (SCFA) that help prevent disease.
Udra11 / Dreamstime / TNS

By MAYO CLINIC NEWS NETWORK (TNS)

ROCHESTER, Minn. — Resolutions to improve health typically include measures such as more exercise, a healthier diet and stopping smoking. But what about your gut microbiome? Taking steps to protect and improve it can benefit digestive health and more, says Purna Kashyap, MBBS, a gastroenterologist at Mayo Clinic who specializes in the gut microbiome and gastrointestinal disorders.

"The microbiome is essentially a community of bacteria, fungi, viruses and all of their genes," Dr. Kashyap explains. "The skin, lungs and reproductive system each have their own microbiomes. The gut microbiome is probably the most diverse in our body. Its microbes perform several functions. The body's other microbiomes tend to be more specialized."

Your gut microbiome is as unique as your fingerprint. These bacteria perform important jobs, including breaking down fiber and starches; synthesizing vitamins and amino acids, such as vitamins B and K; and producing short-chain fatty acids (SCFA) that help prevent disease. They also maintain the intestinal barrier, a protective gut lining.

"For example, when you eat an apple, your stomach and small intestine break down some of it. The rest of the apple goes to your colon, where bacteria do the rest of the work for you," Dr. Kashyap says. "As the bacteria break down the apple's fiber, they produce substances that are good for the cells of the colon and the body."

If you lose these healthy bacteria, it creates an opportunity for some of the bacteria that cause disease to thrive. One example is Clostridioides difficile, or C. diff, a bacterium that can infect the colon, the longest part of the large intestine. Symptoms can range from diarrhea to life-threatening damage to the colon. Risk factors for C. diff infection include antibiotic use, hospitalization and certain medications that affect the immune system.

"If you take antibiotics, your microbiome might change for a short time, but it usually goes back to its original state," Dr. Kashyap says. "The same thing can happen with other changes or behaviors, such as traveling or eating a lot of fast food. Think of your microbiome like a rubber band. You can stretch it a bit, and it bounces back. But if you stretch it too much, it might get disrupted."

In addition to gut infections like C. diff, microbial imbalances are thought to play a role in other diseases and symptoms, including colon cancer; diabetes; depression and other mood disorders; Alzheimer's disease; Parkinson's disease; and cardiovascular disease. More research is needed to understand ties between the gut microbiome and these diseases, Dr. Kashyap says.

How far you can stretch your microbiome depends on several factors. Those include how long the disruption lasts. This is one reason it's important to avoid overusing antibiotics, Dr. Kashyap says.

Some underlying diseases, such as inflammatory intestinal diseases can affect which communities of bacteria can thrive in your gut and which can't. These include inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis.

Dr. Kashyap is studying the interactions between gut bacteria and dietary carbohydrates and how they influence the gastrointestinal system. His long-term goal is to develop new biomarkers and microbiota-targeted therapies for treatment of functional gastrointestinal disorders, including irritable bowel syndrome and chronic bloating, also known as functional bloating.

Lifestyle can also play an important role in the health of your gut microbiome, Dr. Kashyap adds: "Gut bacteria eat what you eat. If you eat a lot of sugary, salty, fatty foods such as snacks, sweets and highly processed foods or consume a lot of alcohol, you'll starve bacteria. As a result, they will try to get nutrients from your gut lining and will damage it in the process."

On the other hand, if your diet is loaded with a diverse array of fruits, vegetables and fiber, you'll nourish a diverse microbial community in your gut.

"The more diverse your gut microbes, the farther you can stretch things before you experience disruption," Dr. Kashyap says. "Happy bugs, happy life."

Other lifestyle habits will help to protect gut health:

- Drink plenty of healthy fluids such as water and limit or avoid alcohol.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes most days.
- Don't smoke.
- Manage stress.

Midlife weight gain can start long before menopause ...

... but you can take steps early on to help your body weather the hormonal shift

By VINAYA GOGINENI and ANNA BARTON BRADLEY
Vanderbilt University (The Conversation)

You're in your mid-40s, eating healthy and exercising regularly. It's the same routine that has worked for years.

Yet lately, the number on the scale is creeping up. Clothes fit differently. A bit of belly fat appears, seemingly overnight. You remember your mother's frustration with the endless dieting, the extra cardio, the talk about "menopause weight." But you're still getting your periods. Menopause should be at least half a decade away.

So what's really going on?

We are a primary care physician with expertise in medical weight management and an endocrinologist and obesity medicine specialist. We hear this story nearly every day. Women doing everything "right" suddenly feel like their bodies are working against them.

And while lifestyle choices still matter, the underlying cause isn't willpower. It's physiology.

Most women expect the weight struggle to begin after menopause. But research suggests the real metabolic shift happens years earlier. During the multiyear transition to menopause, women's bodies begin processing sugar and carbs less efficiently, while their metabolism slows down at rest. That can drive weight gain – especially around the midsection – even if a person's habits haven't changed much.

There are physiological processes that begin long before menopause itself, but weight gain around the menopause transition isn't necessarily inevitable. Recognizing this early window makes it possible to intervene while your body is still adaptable.

The silent shift before menopause

Menopause is officially defined as 12 months without a period. But the body's hormonal transition, which comes from changes in signaling between the brain and ovaries, begins years earlier during a stage called perimenopause. This phase is when estrogen and progesterone start to fluctuate unpredictably.

Those hormonal shifts ripple through nearly every metabolic system. Estrogen helps regulate fat distribution, muscle repair and insulin sensitivity. When levels swing wildly, the body begins storing fat differently, moving it from the hips and thighs to the abdomen. Muscle protein synthesis also slows down.

The result is gradual muscle loss and increased insulin resistance, even when habits haven't changed. At the same time, these hormonal changes can disrupt sleep, influence cortisol levels and alter appetite.

Just as those physiological changes are revving up, intensive caregiving and other demands are often increasing too, leaving less time for exercise, sleep and other basic self-care.

What's most striking isn't the number on the scale, but rather the change in body composition. Even if weight stays the same, women often lose muscle and gain belly fat. This deeper fat surrounds vital organs and is linked to inflammation and a higher risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, liver disease and sleep disorders.

Why perimenopause is the real turning point

A study called the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation has been tracking women of different backgrounds in many parts of the U.S. since 1994 to investigate the physiological changes that occur throughout a woman's midlife years. One of its key findings was that fat mass begins increasing and lean muscle declines during perimenopause, long before periods stop.

Once this accelerated redistribution plateaus during menopause, reversal becomes much harder, though not impossible.

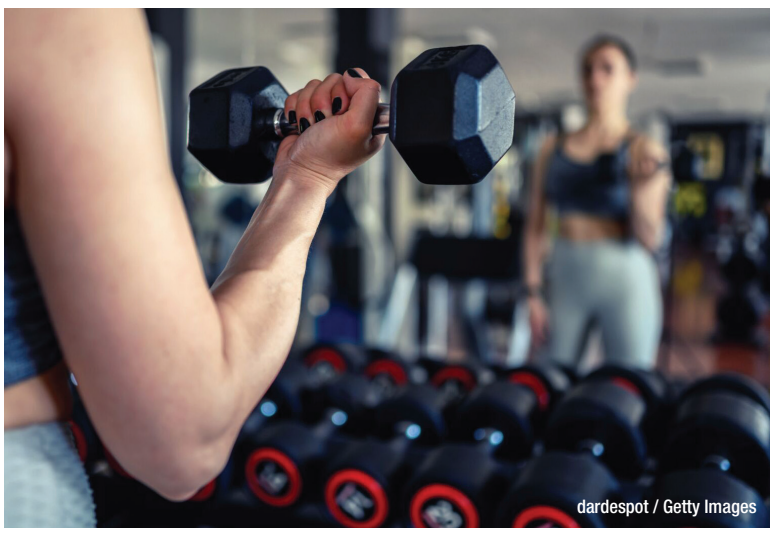
That's why perimenopause should be viewed as a window of metabolic opportunity. The body is still adaptable; it's responsive to strength training, high-quality nutrition and better sleep routines. With the right strategies, women can offset these hormonal effects and set themselves up for a healthier transition through menopause and beyond.

Unfortunately, most health care approaches to the menopause transition are reactive. Symptoms like hot flashes or sleep issues are addressed only after they appear. Rarely are women told that metabolic risk reduction starts years earlier, during this hidden but critical phase of life.

What most women haven't been told

The usual advice of "eat less, move more" misses the point for women in their 40s. It oversimplifies biology and ignores hormonal context.

For example, for exercise, cardio alone is insufficient for weight management and optimal metabolic health. Strength training, which is too often overlooked, becomes essential to preserve lean muscle and maintain insulin sensitivity. Adequate protein intake supports these changes as well.



dardespot / Getty Images

Sleep and stress regulation are equally vital. Estrogen fluctuations can disrupt cortisol rhythms, leading to cravings, fatigue and nighttime awakenings. Prioritizing sleep-hygiene practices such as limiting screen time before bed, getting morning sunlight, avoiding late-night eating and exercising earlier in the day helps regulate these hormonal rhythms.

Understanding why these habits matter gives important context for strategizing sustainable modifications that fit each person's lifestyle.

How women can take action early

The decades of one's 30s and 40s don't need to be a countdown to decline, but instead, an opportunity to build metabolic resilience. With awareness, evidence-based strategies and proactive care, women can navigate perimenopause and the menopause transition with confidence and strength. Here are a few strategies to start with:

- **Lift weights.** Aim for two to three sessions of resistance or strength training per week to preserve muscle and boost metabolism. Work on progressive overload, which refers to the gradual increase in stress placed on your muscles.
- **Prioritize protein.** Include adequate protein in every meal to support muscle, increase satiety and stabilize blood sugar. There is a growing body of evidence indicating a need for a higher protein requirement than the current Recommended Dietary Allowance guidelines. Aim for 0.55 to 0.73 grams of protein per pound of body weight daily to reduce the risk of age-related muscle loss.
- **Sleep smarter.** Sleep hygiene and stress management help regulate cortisol and appetite hormones. Aim for between seven and eight hours of quality sleep each night.
- **Ask different questions.** During annual checkups, talk to your clinician about body composition and metabolic health, not just weight. And preemptively discuss the risks and benefits of menopause hormone therapy.

Your metabolism isn't broken; it's adapting to a new stage of your life. And once you understand that, you can work with your body, not against it.

Vinaya Gogineni is a fellow in obesity medicine and Anna Barton Bradley is an assistant professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

Why do babies need the hepatitis B vaccine?

By DAVID HIGGINS, M.D., MPH, FAAP
American Academy of Pediatrics (TNS)

Daniel Chetroni / Dreamstime / TNS

The hepatitis B vaccine is over 95 percent effective at preventing the disease in children and adults.

Hepatitis B is a virus that can damage the liver and lead to lifelong health problems. The hepatitis B vaccine prevents short-term illness (acute hepatitis) and a life-threatening infection called chronic hepatitis B.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes that a federal advisory panel's decision to weaken hepatitis B vaccine recommendations for newborns is dangerous and could put children at risk. AAP still strongly recommends that all babies get a first dose of hepatitis B vaccine within 24 hours of birth as part of routine care.

Newborns need the hepatitis B vaccine soon after birth. That's because they could be unknowingly exposed to the virus during labor or shortly after coming home. Other family members or caregivers can give hepatitis B to newborns as people often don't know they are infected with the virus due to lack of symptoms.

Children infected at birth and in early childhood are much more likely to get chronic hepatitis B than adults. The majority (90 percent) of infants infected at birth develop chronic hepatitis. That's why babies benefit most when they get the vaccine early, during the first 24 hours of life.

Hepatitis B spreads when blood or other body fluids with the virus get into the body of someone who isn't infected. The virus can survive for up to 7 days in dried blood particles on surfaces and objects, including personal items people use regularly and sometimes share.

People can become infected with hep B through contact with blood or other bodily fluids from an infected person, including during birth or by sharing items like razors or toothbrushes, through sexual activity, or from accidental pokes by sharp objects like needles.

People with chronic hepatitis often do not have symptoms, but the effects are serious. The disease can cause liver damage, liver cancer and death.

The good news is that most people who get vaccinated against hepatitis B are immune for life. The vaccine is over 95 percent effective at preventing this disease in children and adults. Babies have incredible immune systems, ready to learn as soon as they are born. The vaccine, given in the first 24 hours of life, teaches their immune system how to recognize and resist the virus faster than the virus can multiply and cause disease.

The first dose of the hepatitis B vaccine protects newborns from possible exposures during delivery and the first few days of life. It provides a safety net for babies whose family members may not know they are infected. Testing for hepatitis B during pregnancy or delivery can be helpful, but sometimes results aren't ready in time or the test may miss an infection. Mothers always have the chance to get infected between the time they're tested and they give birth.

People are tested for hepatitis B during each pregnancy. Testing may be done during labor and delivery at the hospital. Hepatitis B vaccine can be given to someone during pregnancy if they have not been vaccinated.

Sadly, 25 percent of babies who get chronic hepatitis B die. In high-risk deliveries, the baby may receive a dose of hepatitis B immune globulin in addition to vaccine. This gives the immune system extra antibodies that protect the baby for a few weeks post-birth.

Babies get a second dose of hepatitis B vaccine when they are 1 month to 2 months old and the third dose when they are 6 months to 18 months old. After babies complete all their doses, they live a life free from hepatitis B and the liver damage it causes.

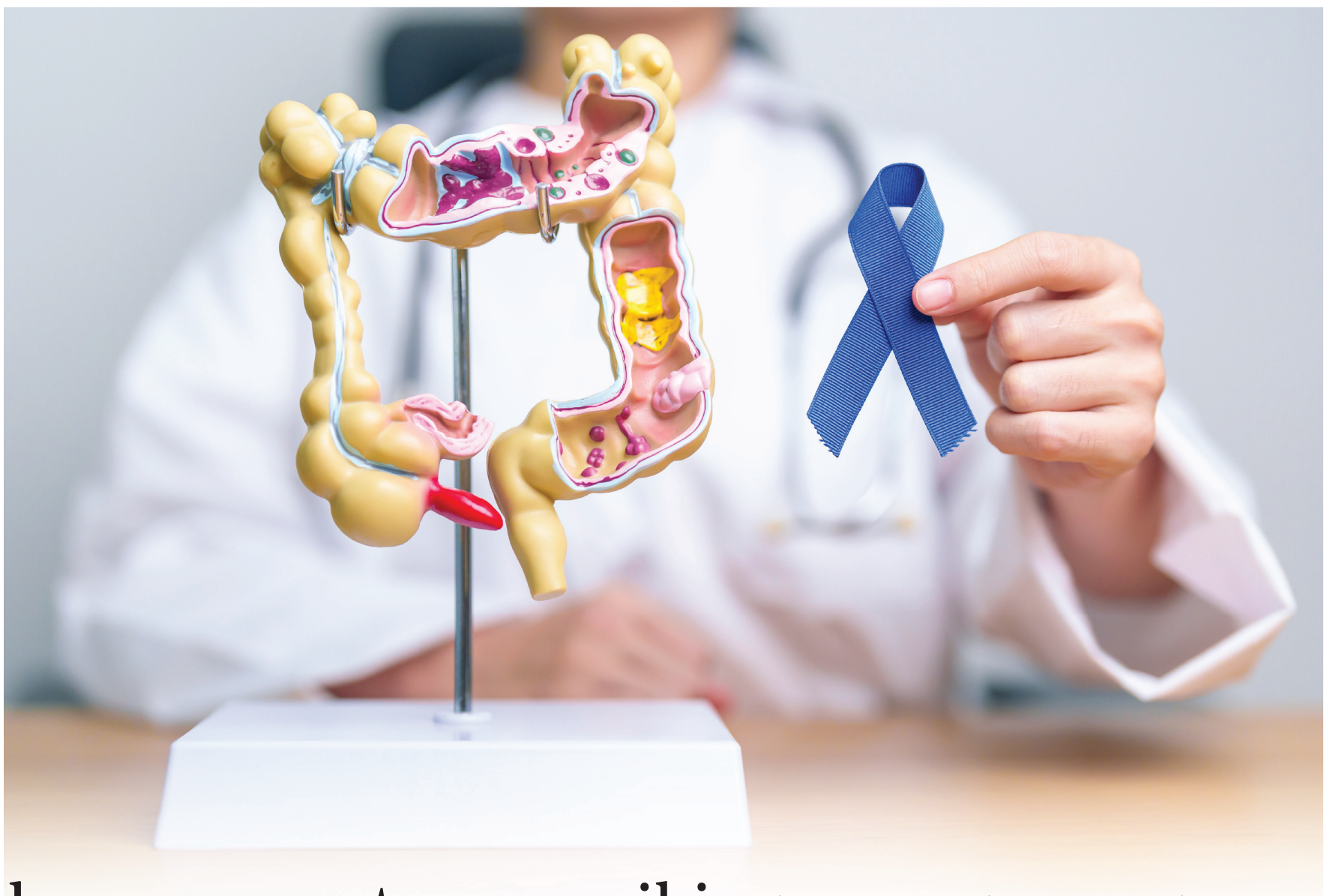
Hepatitis B vaccine can be combined safely with other vaccines in the same shot. It can also be one of several shots for different vaccines received in the same visit to the doctor.

If you're an expecting parent with questions about the vaccine, talk with your OB/GYN and pediatrician before your baby is born.

Tell your doctor if someone getting the hepatitis B vaccine has any life-threatening allergies. Do the same if you are sick. People with minor illnesses, like a cold, can get vaccinated. You and your doctor will evaluate your situation. You can discuss testing and preventing hepatitis B through vaccination.

Occasionally, people have redness or swelling or feel soreness where they received the shot. A few babies might get a fever. For any signs that concern you, call your doctor.

David Higgins, M.D., MPH, FAAP, is a pediatrician and preventive medicine specialist at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. He serves as the vice president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and as an Immunization Representative. His work focuses on vaccine delivery, communication, and policy, and he serves in statewide and national roles supporting evidence-based immunization practices.



Colon cancer rates are spiking among young people

Here's why, and how to lower your risk

By EMILY BRINDLEY
The Dallas Morning News (TNS)

DALLAS — Dr. Bethany Malone has treated a lot of colorectal cancer patients. The youngest, not counting those with genetic conditions, was 19 years old.

Colorectal cancer used to be considered a cancer of older age. Not anymore.

Patients in their teens and early 20s still aren't the norm, exactly, but are becoming more common.

"I have not gone a year in practice without taking a colon cancer out of someone in their 20s," Malone said.

Malone is a colon and rectal surgeon and the associate program director for the general surgery residency at Texas Health Harris Methodist Hospital Fort Worth. Her experience in North Texas reflects a worldwide trend.

Colorectal cancer – which includes cancer of the colon and of the rectum – is considered early onset when diagnosed in people under the age of 50. While the majority of diagnoses are still among people aged 65 or older, early onset rates have been increasing worldwide, particularly in high-income countries.

In a 2023 report, the American Cancer Society wrote that the trends of decreasing incidence in older people and increasing incidence in younger people are "rapidly shifting the patient population younger."

In 2020, "Black Panther" actor Chadwick Boseman died from colon cancer at age 43. More recently, former Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders choreographer Criscilla Anderson died of colon cancer at age 45.

Here's what medical experts say.

Why are colorectal cancer rates rising among younger people?

Medical experts say there isn't one reason why colorectal cancer rates are rising in the below-50 age groups. But there are some contributing factors.

First, it's not because of genetics. Dr. Radhika Kainthla, a medical oncologist at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas, said that about 20 percent of early onset colorectal cancer patients have a genetic tie-in. That means 80 percent do not.

"There's a misconception a lot of times that if it's a young person being diagnosed with cancer, it must be genetic," Kainthla said. "But that's not actually what we're seeing."

All three experts who spoke with The Dallas Morning News pointed instead to a combination of environmental factors and lifestyle factors, such as diets high in red meat, diets packed with ultra-processed foods and lack of regular exercise.

Malone at Texas Health Fort Worth said fiber intake especially tends to be low for Americans, which can increase the risk for colorectal cancer. Fiber does a lot of work in the gut, Malone said, including feeding a healthy microbiome and helping to flush carcinogens out of the body before they're absorbed.

Malone noted that the "lifestyle" factors are not always easily controllable. The U.S. food system has shifted significantly toward ultra-processed foods, which tend to be low in necessary nutrients such as fiber.

There are also environmental factors at play, said Dr. Emina Huang, a professor of surgery and a colorectal surgeon at UT Southwestern Medical Center. For instance, living near a superfund site – which are hazardous waste sites – has been shown to increase the risk of cancer.

How can I reduce my risk of colorectal cancer?

Reducing the risk of colorectal cancer, the three experts said, comes down to a lot of the standard advice that medical professionals recommend for general health, too.

The three experts said that folks should focus on getting regular exercise, avoiding smoking, moderating alcohol intake and eating a diet that's low in red meat but rich in fruits, vegetables and fiber.

Obesity is also a risk factor for colorectal cancer, the experts said, although Malone cautioned against focusing on weight loss alone. Restrictive diets may also end up being low in fiber, which is harmful rather than helpful for colorectal cancer risk.

And, of course, patients should pay attention to their bodies and seek medical care if they notice abdominal pain or changes in their bowel movements.

When should I start getting screened for colorectal cancer?

Because of the rising rates of colorectal cancer among younger people, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force advises regular screenings beginning at age 45. The gold standard of screening is a colonoscopy, but stool tests and scans can also be used for screening.

The age 45 recommendation, however, is for patients who have a standard risk for colorectal cancer. Some people may be at higher risk due to personal or family history.

People with a first-degree relative – a sibling, parent or child – diagnosed with colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps may be advised to begin screenings at a younger age. In general, medical professionals advise beginning screening when a patient is 10 years younger than their relative was at the age of diagnosis. For instance, if your father was diagnosed with colorectal cancer at age 48, you should begin screenings at age 38.

Patients with such a family history should start screenings no later than 40.

Similarly, patients who have personal histories of Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis are at higher risk of colorectal cancer, too, and should also begin screenings at an earlier age.

Kainthla, at Parkland, also noted that there are other types of screenings besides colonoscopies, such as blood tests and stool tests, that may be a useful option for some patients.

What are the warning signs of colorectal cancer?

Medical experts are quick to point out that, for most young people, abdominal or gastrointestinal symptoms are unlikely to indicate colorectal cancer.

Still, some symptoms should serve as red flags.

The most common early symptoms are stomach pain that doesn't go away, changes in bowel movements with no improvement or blood in the stool.

Sometimes, these symptoms can indicate hemorrhoids or other relatively benign conditions. However, if a patient is treated for a benign condition but symptoms do not improve, that's a sign that something more may be going on.

Getty Images

FINANCE

SURVEY

Fewer Americans believe their finances will improve in the year ahead, compared to past

By KAREN BENNETT
Bankrate.com (TNS)

Faced with sticky inflation and a job market that's losing steam, many Americans are feeling rattled these days. And when it comes to the year ahead, 32 percent think their personal finances will worsen in 2026, Bankrate's recent Financial Outlook Survey found – the highest level of pessimism since 2018, when Bankrate began asking consumers about their financial outlook. Last year, 23 percent thought their finances would worsen in 2025.

Inflation and the current political landscape are common drivers for people's current negative outlook: Those who expect their personal finances to get worse next year frequently cited continued high inflation (78 percent) and work done by elected representatives (55 percent) as the reasons for their concern.

U.S. economic data validates these concerns. Although inflation has come down after peaking at 9.1 percent in June 2022, prices have climbed around 25 percent since 2020. And for many, inflation isn't being offset by higher incomes, as the median household income last year wasn't statistically different from that of 2019.

Bankrate's key findings

■ Americans are less optimistic about their finances in the year ahead 32 percent think their finances will worsen in 2026; last year, 23 percent said the same when asked about their expectations for 2025.

■ Inflation remains a big financial concern Among those who think their financial situation will get worse, 78 percent say they feel that way because of continued high inflation.

■ Paying down debt is a top financial goal 19 percent of Americans said that paying down debt is their main financial goal for 2026.

Americans are less likely to believe their finances will improve in 2026

While many survey respondents expect their finances to worsen in the coming year, the survey found that about one in three (34 percent) Americans felt their financial situation would improve next year, which is down from last year's survey when 44 percent said they expected improvement. Another 34 percent said they felt their situation would stay the same next year.

Across generations, those who don't expect their finances to get better next year – that is, who expect their finances to stay the same, get somewhat worse or get significantly worse – include:

■ 54 percent of Gen Z (ages 18-28)
■ 60 percent of millennials (ages 29-44)
■ 69 percent of Gen X (ages 45-60)
■ 76 percent of baby boomers (ages 61-79)

Those who think their finances will improve include:

■ 46 percent of Gen Z
■ 40 percent of millennials
■ 31 percent of Gen X
■ 25 percent of baby boomers

Due to rounding, figures might not total 100 percent.

The rise in pessimism this year was measured across party lines. The percentage of Republicans who said their personal finances would get better in the following year declined to 44 percent in the latest survey, down from 62 percent in a similar survey that ran the same time last year. Meanwhile, 37 percent of Democrats felt that their financial situation would worsen next year, up from 30 percent in last year's poll.

Continued high inflation is a top worry

The Consumer Price Index (CPI), a common measure of inflation, has been creeping up in recent months and hit 3 percent in September – the highest level since the start of 2025. As a result, household budgets are stretched thinner with increasing prices on everything from groceries and apparel to furniture and car repairs.

A majority of those (78 percent) who thought their finances would worsen next year said they felt that way because of continued high inflation.

Other significant reasons include work done by elected representatives (55 percent), stagnant or reduced income (46 percent) and the amount of debt they have (25 percent).

Of those who think their financial situation will improve next year, nearly half (47 percent) say it's thanks to rising income. That compares to 35 percent who cited this reason a year ago. Other top reasons why Americans think their finances will improve include better spending habits (40 percent), having less debt (37 percent) and making more money from savings or investments (30 percent).

Reducing debt remains a top financial goal for next year

The most common main financial goal cited by Americans for 2026 is paying down debt (19 percent), and that percentage tends to rise with age. By generation, that breaks down to:

■ 9 percent of Gen Z
■ 16 percent of millennials
■ 24 percent of Gen X
■ 25 percent of baby boomers

"That more senior Americans are most focused on attacking their debt levels shows how costly and pernicious debt can be, particularly the highest cost debt, which results from credit cards," Hamrick says. "It is prudent to shed this debt where possible."

Credit card annual percentage rates (APRs) currently average around 20 percent. And nearly half of credit cardholders (46 percent) are carrying a credit card balance, according to Bankrate's Credit Card Debt Survey.

Getting a higher paying job or an additional source of income is the second most common main financial goal for Americans (14 percent), followed by saving more money for emergencies (13 percent) and budgeting spending better (12 percent).

One in 10 Americans (10 percent) have no financial goals for 2026, with baby boomers most likely to say they do not have them:

■ Gen Z: 6 percent
■ Millennials: 9 percent
■ Gen X: 8 percent
■ Baby boomers: 14 percent

Many plan to address their main financial goal right away

Of those who told Bankrate they have a main financial goal, 44 percent said it's a New Year's resolution they'll address right away.

Meanwhile, nearly one-third (35 percent) said they'll address their goal once they've had time to think and plan, while 12 percent said it's a long-term issue they'll address after doing research or seeking advice. Nearly 1 in 10 (9 percent) said they don't know how they'll address their main financial goal in the coming year.

Bottom line

Bankrate's Financial Outlook Survey for the year 2026 shows the number of Americans who are pessimistic about their personal finances has risen to the highest level in at least the last eight years. Americans are feeling less optimistic about their finances, fueled by factors such as inflation and stagnant or reduced income.

Consumers' worries aren't unfounded, considering prices continue to rise while incomes don't seem to keep pace. As household budgets become stretched increasingly thin, Americans are prioritizing goals of paying down debt, saving money for emergencies and finding additional sources of income.

"With so many Americans looking to find a better-paying job or other form of income boost, here's hoping that the job market remains sufficiently resilient that their hopes will be realized," Hamrick says. "The risk is that unemployment rises before it makes a meaningful move lower, which will translate to added financial pressure and stress for individuals and households."

Methodology: Bankrate commissioned YouGov Plc to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 2,539 U.S. adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between November 3-5, 2025. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards. It gathered a non-probability-based sample and employed demographic quotas and weights to better align the survey sample with the broader U.S. population.

Visit Bankrate online at bankrate.com.

Inflation and the current political landscape are common drivers for people's current negative outlook.

Viktansof / Dreamstime / TNS

FOOD

5 tips – and dishes – to get your new year off to a healthy start

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

A new year is often challenging. Despite knowing we should throw out old, bad habits along with the New Year's Eve party favors, change is hard.

Many of us eat more than we should. Yet nothing changes for the better – especially in terms of health – when we keep eating those bad-for-us-but-tasty processed junk foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat and low in nutrients.

In terms of home cooking, modifying the way you eat to improve nutrition and health is easier one dish at a time, as opposed to suddenly deciding to quit cold turkey on the likes of meat, carbs or sugar.

As someone probably told you time and again: Slow and steady often wins the race.

The food catchphrase of late is "mindful eating" – that is, paying attention with all of your senses (not just taste) to experience, enjoy and improve our relationship with food. But that's just a start.

To help you on your 2026 food journey, here are five more practical tips that cover the basics of healthy eating and can lead to healthier choices at the grocery store. They're paired with easy, good-for-you recipes that can be added to the weekly rotation.

This year's tips include eating a wide variety of colorful vegetables, to provide the body with a good source of vitamins and nutrients, improve digestion and encourage healthy aging; occasionally trading meat for plant-based proteins, to lower risk of heart disease and other chronic illnesses; cutting down on sugar and saturated fats; eating more fiber, to feed beneficial bacteria in the gut and promote regular bowel movements; and, finally, staying hydrated to keep your body functioning properly.

All the accompanying recipes are easy to make with everyday ingredients. So no excuses!

Fried tofu is topped with chopped peanuts and cilantro inside a lettuce leaf wrap.

Photos by Gretchen McKay / Pittsburgh Post-Gazette / TNS

Making masala with chickpeas instead of chicken is an easy way to get more fiber in your diet.

Eat more fiber

Chickpea Masala
Serves 6

Fiber-rich foods include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds. They're often low in fat and fill you up, as many high-fiber foods are starchy.

You won't miss the chicken in this creamy vegetarian dish featuring a spiced sauce made with tomato paste, chile and ginger. The main ingredient – chickpeas – is a nutritional powerhouse that provides protein along with both soluble and insoluble fibers, making a serving (or two) excellent for gut health.

I served this dish with both steamed rice and warm naan for scooping up the flavorful gravy. If you like less spice, substitute a jalapeño for the serrano chile.

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon (or more) kosher salt, divided
- 1/2 cup tomato paste
- 1/2 serrano chile, seeded, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon grated or finely chopped peeled ginger
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans chickpeas, drained, rinsed
- 1/8 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon garam masala
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon Kashmiri chili powder or 3/4 teaspoon paprika plus 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon dried fenugreek leaves or kasoori methi, optional
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves, torn or coarsely chopped
- Cooked jasmine rice or naan, for serving

In a large, high-sided skillet over medium heat, melt butter.

Add onion and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 7 minutes.

Add tomato paste and cook, stirring constantly, until darkened, 4 to 5 minutes.

Add chile and ginger and cook, stirring until fragrant and tomato paste is starting to stick to bottom of pan, about 1 minute more.

Add chickpeas and baking soda and stir to combine, then add garam masala, cumin and chili powder and cook, stirring frequently, until fragrant and incorporated, about 30 seconds.

Stir in cream, 1 cup water, fenugreek (if using), and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt.

Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to low and continue to simmer, stirring occasionally, until sauce is reduced, 10 to 15 minutes; season with more salt, if needed. Top with cilantro.

Divide rice among bowls or plates. Spoon chickpea mixture over rice and serve.

Delish.com

Eat more vegetables

Crunchy Kale Salad
Serves 4-6

According to U.S. guidelines, adults should aim for at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day. That explains why our mothers and grandmothers have been urging – maybe even pleading – with us to eat more veggies for as long as anyone can remember, and always tucked a piece of fruit in our lunchboxes.

This kale salad makes it easy to make mom happy. Tossed in a zesty cilantro-lime dressing, it lives up to its name with an abundance of crunchy vegetables that taste great, don't cost a fortune and are easy to find in any grocery store.

I added a handful of dried cherries, but Craisins would also add a touch of sweetness. If you don't care for feta, substitute another crumbly cheese like cotija or use goat cheese (or no cheese) instead. For those with nut allergies, add pumpkin or sunflower seeds in lieu of peanuts.

FOR DRESSING:

- 1 large bunch cilantro, roughly chopped
- 1 garlic clove, peeled
- 1/4 cup lime juice
- 1/2 teaspoon honey
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch of cumin, optional
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE SALAD:

- 1 (10- to 12-ounce) bunch curly kale, chopped or torn into small pieces
- 1/4 small green cabbage, chopped
- 1 Granny Smith apple, cored and diced
- 1/2 seedless cucumber, diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1/3 cup honey roasted peanuts, roughly chopped
- 1/3 cup dried cherries or Craisins, optional
- 1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese
- Kosher salt

Make the dressing: Add cilantro, garlic, lime juice and honey to a food processor or blender. Blend until the cilantro has been chopped, then slowly stream in the olive oil until you've reached your desired consistency. Season to taste with cumin, if using, and salt and pepper.

Make the salad: Add kale to a large bowl along with a pinch of salt. Massage kale for 1-2 minutes until all the leaves are slightly darkened and have softened a bit.

Add chopped green cabbage, apple, cucumber, celery, scallions, peanuts, cherries or Craisins (if using), and crumbled feta. Season to taste with salt.

Pour over desired amount of dressing, and toss gently to combine.

Adapted from delish.com

This healthful apple crisp has minimal sugar and fat.

Eat more plant-based protein

Caramelized Tofu Lettuce Wraps
Serves 2-4

Derived from non-animal sources, plant-based proteins include legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains like quinoa and oats, and soy products like tofu (made from pressed soy curds) and tempeh (made from fermented whole soybeans).

Tofu can get a bad rap, not because of a myth that it can cause men to grow breasts (my husband's hair-brained, unscientific theory), but because of its off-putting texture – sometimes silky, other times spongy.

But if you crumble a block of the protein-rich bean curd into pea-sized pieces, fry it until it's golden and then toss the crispy bits in a savory-sweet sauce, it's a fine substitute for ground beef or chicken in a lettuce wrap. That's especially the case if you add a sprinkle of chopped peanuts on top for a lovely, nutty crunch.

Tofu comes in two varieties: Silken and firm/extra firm. Be sure to use firm tofu, which is pressed to remove more water – and press it again in a clean dish towel weighed down with a skillet to keep it from falling apart in the pan when you cook it.

How good is this dish? Even my husband had to agree he's been missing out with his boycott.

- 14-ounce block firm tofu, drained
- 1/4 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons packed dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon fish sauce (optional)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1-inch fresh ginger, minced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Butterhead or romaine lettuce, leaves separated, for serving
- Cilantro leaves, for serving
- Chopped roasted peanuts, for serving
- Lime wedges, for serving

Wrap tofu in a clean kitchen towel or paper towels and place on a cutting board. Place a heavy, flat object on top of tofu (like a skillet or baking sheet) and weigh it down with cans or another skillet. Let tofu drain for at least 15 minutes, and up to 45 minutes.

Crumble tofu into a medium bowl using your fingers. The biggest pieces should be about the size of a pea.

In another medium bowl, whisk together soy sauce, sugar, vinegar, sesame oil, red pepper flakes and fish sauce, if using. (It's OK if the sugar doesn't dissolve completely; it will once added to the pan.)

In a large cast-iron skillet or nonstick pan over medium-high heat, heat vegetable oil until shimmering. Add tofu, shake into an even layer, and let cook undisturbed until deeply golden on the bottom, about 5 minutes.

Stir the tofu and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the tofu is crispy and golden throughout, about 4 minutes more. Add ginger and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add soy mixture to pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until no liquid remains, about 3 minutes more.

Add heaping spoonfuls of tofu mixture to the center of each lettuce leaf. Top with cilantro leaves, peanuts and a squeeze of lime before serving.

Delish.com

Cut down on saturated fat, salt and sugar

Healthy Apple Crisp
Serves 4

Healthy adults should limit themselves to about 1 teaspoon of salt a day, according to the Mayo Clinic, and keep their intake of saturated fats to 13 grams per day.

Sugar is fine in small amounts in a balanced diet, but it's really easy to go overboard when you spy a box of cookies on the counter, isn't it?

Regularly consuming foods and drinks that are high in sugar increases the risk of obesity and tooth decay.

Try this super-easy, old-fashioned apple dessert the next time you get the urge for something sweet. Rolled oats provide fiber (and crunch), while the apple comes packed with Vitamin C, antioxidants and minimal fat.

- 5 cups sliced, peeled baking apples
- 6 tablespoons brown sugar, divided
- 4 tablespoons all-purpose flour, divided
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3/4 teaspoon apple pie spice or allspice, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon plus a pinch of salt, divided
- 1/2 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Combine apples, 2 tablespoons brown sugar, 1 tablespoon flour, lemon juice, 1/2 teaspoon apple pie spice and a pinch of salt in a large bowl. Transfer to a 2-quart square baking dish.

Combine 1/2 cup oats and the remaining 4 tablespoons brown sugar, 3 tablespoons flour, 1/4 teaspoon apple pie spice and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl.

Cut in 4 tablespoons butter until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle the topping over the filling.

Bake until the apples are tender and the topping is golden brown, 30-35 minutes. Serve warm.

Eatingwell.com

Stay hydrated

Orange-Cucumber Salad with Honey Lime Dressing
Serves 4-6

Are you one of those people who always has an insulated water bottle nearby? Good for you. But just as many of us walk around each day under-hydrated. (Most people need about four to six cups of plain water each day.)

One simple way to get the fluids you need if you're not a sipper is to eat fruit with high water content. An added benefit: Water-rich fruits like strawberries, cucumbers and oranges also provide essential vitamins, electrolytes and fiber.

This colorful winter salad pairs five fruits with a bright honey-lime dressing. Close your eyes while eating it and you'll swear it's summer.

FOR SALAD:

- 1 Granny Smith apple
- 1/2 seedless cucumber
- 1 naval orange
- 1 cup sliced strawberries
- 1/2 cup blueberries

FOR DRESSING:

- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh lime zest
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

Roughly chop apple and place in a bowl. Slice the cucumbers into half-moons and toss with the apples.

Slice the whole orange into wedges, removing the peel and allowing any orange juice to coat the apple and cucumber pieces. Add berries and stir gently to combine.

Prepare dressing: In small bowl whisk together honey, lime zest and lime juice until well combined.

Plate fruit and drizzle with dressing. Enjoy!

Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Mexican singer Jesus Ortiz Paz, aka JOP, of Fuerza Regida performs onstage during the 26th Annual Latin Grammy Awards at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, on Nov. 13, 2025.
Valerie Macon / AFP / Getty Images / TNS

Fuerza Regida is flying high

Bandleader JOP wants Mexican music to soar

By ANDREA FLORES
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — If there is anyone who believes in the power of manifestation, it is Fuerza Regida frontman Jesús Ortiz Paz. "Ialways knew I was gonna do it," he said in November, on the eve of the 2025 Latin Grammy Awards in Las Vegas.

What "it" is has become clearer in the last year for the 28-year-old vocalist, also known by fans as "JOP," who has led his band to top multiple Billboard charts and helped propel the Mexican corrido tradition. We met in a cozy bar at the Crockfords, one of the swankiest luxury hotels on the north end of the Las Vegas Strip. Just minutes before our interview, a hotel staffer came by to shake JOP's hand, as if the two had known each other for years.

"A brother from another mother," the hotel staffer told JOP, who flashed a grin glittering with tooth gems. Dressed in a modest white tee and basketball shorts, the música mexicana star's outfit that day was a far cry from the oversized streetwear and diamond-encrusted jewelry he usually dons in public.

The following night at the Latin Grammys, during Fuerza Regida's performance of "Marlboro Rojo" at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, the internet quickly clocked the price tag still affixed to JOP's jacket – prompting an endless scroll of jokes on social media. Rather than shrink in embarrassment, the singer poked fun at himself on his Instagram story with a caption that read: "Estaba en especial"/"It was on sale."

Since then, JOP has continued to leave retail tags on clothes in various social media posts. If anyone is going to make the most of a situation, it's going to be him.

Fuerza Regida has come a long way since it first went viral in 2018 for the song "Radicamos en South Central," a rugged corrido tumbado that tells the story of how a kingpin's empire was built brick by brick.

The San Bernardino band is a pioneer of the subgenre, which blends the traditional instrumentation of Mexican folk balladry with elements of American trap music, namely its beats and the gritty lyrical content that deals with matters of moving contraband, turf wars and endless hustle. Corridos tumbados embody the biculturalism experienced by Mexican Americans, fusing lo de aquí with lo de allá.

Thanks to its street-wise sound and ethos, Fuerza Regida has helped pave the way for a new generation to rise up within música mexicana. Luminate, a data analysis company, credited the growth of Latin music in 2024 to the surge of regional Mexican music; Fuerza Regida, Peso Pluma and Junior H were some of the most-streamed Latin artists in the U.S. that year, alongside reggaeton singer Bad Bunny.

In 2025, the band's groundbreaking ninth studio album, "111Xpantia," elevated it to new levels of global stardom. The 12-track project leaned heavily into genre-specific instruments like the tololoche and charcheta for its foundation while still managing to be experimental and ambitious – opener "Godfather" samples Nino Rota's "Love Theme From 'The Godfather'" from the iconic film.

The LP (the title is inspired by the Nahuatl word for manifestations, "ixpantia") debuted at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 chart and became the highest-charting Spanish-language album by a group or duo. Tracks like the hypnotic "Tu Sancho" and the gritty "Marlboro Rojo" topped the Mexican Billboard chart, with the latter earning the No. 1 spot on the Hot Latin Songs list.

"111Xpantia" landed just one spot below Bad Bunny's chart-topping record, "Debí Tirar Más Fotos," the first time ever that two Spanish-language albums have occupied the top two spots on the Billboard 200 chart at the same time.

This also kicked off a series of firsts for the band, which made its TV debut last year, including appearances on " Jimmy Kimmel Live!" and " The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon." By the end of 2025, Fuerza would wind up No. 10 on Spotify's global top artist list.

"My feet left the ground," said JOP of the band's groundbreaking past year and finding a new level of normalcy. "Now, my feet are on the ground and I'm chilling."

Despite its mainstream success in both Mexico and the U.S. – and making various end-of-year best of lists – "111Xpantia" received zero nominations at the 2025 Latin Grammys and the upcoming Grammy Awards, which will take place Feb. 1 at downtown L.A.'s Crypto.com Arena.

"I don't get how that album didn't get nominated," JOP says. "But I respect their decision. Next time."

At the time of our interview, the band was up for its first Latin Grammy nomination under the regional song category for "Me Jalo," a collaboration with Texan band Grupo Frontera, which took the TikTok world by storm. (The song would later lose to Los Tigres del Norte, who won for the song "La Lotería.")

In February, both Fuerza Regida and Grupo Frontera will contend for their first Grammy Award in the música mexicana album category, for their joint 2024 EP, "Mala Mía."

"I was like, 'Finally!' said JOP. Fuerza Regida has claimed that its previous studio album, 2024's "Pero No Te Enamores," was sidelined by its label Rancho Humilde ahead of last year's Latin Grammys.

Although Fuerza Regida still releases music under the imprint, the band is in the thick of a legal battle with Rancho Humilde – an independent record company led by music mogul Jimmy Humilde, who signed the group in 2018.

In September, Rancho Humilde filed a lawsuit against Fuerza Regida, alleging breaches of contract for unilaterally collaborating with artists outside the label (such as Chino Pacas and Drake) and signing exclusive live performance deals with Apple Music and Live Nation.

Fuerza Regida countersued, alleging that Rancho Humilde withheld millions in royalties and attempted to "sabotage" the band's success, including by neglecting to submit its music for consideration ahead of the 2024 Latin Grammys. The legal tussle is working its way through federal court.

A request for comment sent to Rancho Humilde through its attorneys was not returned as of publication.

"People have done so much stuff to me, record labels and a lot of things like that, that it don't faze me no more," JOP said. "I just keep moving and onto the next, you know, and we're gonna figure it out."

Since 2019, JOP has been building up his own label, Street Mob Records, with the intent to support rising talent in música mexicana – including the Salinas, Calif., band Clave Especial. The players fondly recalled JOP's rigor in the studio; one night he stayed up until 4 a.m. with the trio to help configure the beats on their latest record, "Mija No Te Asustes."

"It's like working with somebody with that same ambition," said lead singer Alex Ahumada. "[It's] like [a] loquera, that's how I like to call it."

JOP prides himself in teaching his artists the ins and outs of the music industry, including negotiation skills he wishes he'd learned at the start of his career. He's advised the artists on Street Mob's roster – Chino Pacas, Armenta, Chuyin and others – to view their time under the label as akin to a college education.

"You're gonna be here for a certain amount of years, you're gonna learn and then you can leave if you want," explained JOP. "I went through certain times in my career where like I was trying to learn and it was just like, daban la pata," he recalled, as if to say people in the industry were just pulling his leg. "And they don't show you s---."

Throughout our interview, JOP stressed loyalty. He is almost always surrounded by his bandmates – requinto guitarist Samuel Jaimez, guitarron player Khrystian Ramos, tubist José Garcia and tololoche player Moises Lopez – but there are also other recurring characters who populate his wondrous rock star existence.

Often by his side is Cristian "Toro" Primera, chief operations officer at Street Mob Records, who used to lend JOP music equipment at the start of his career; and never far from the star is Jesus "Mosca" Amezcua, his manager and cousin, who fondly recalls playing soccer together when they were younger.

JOP is often flanked by bodyguard Mario Rogelio, who once got his foot run over by a car while protecting the band in New York City. His other bodyguard, Samuel "Rhino" Galindo, is a giant who loves to chat about his favorite Westwood cookie shop (Psst – it's Diddy Riese).

Protecting the famed band is a tough gig, though. In 2023, one of Fuerza Regida's guards died from a firearm-related injury while in a vehicle in Veracruz, Mexico. The band offered their condolences at the time of the incident: "We want to send our most sincere condolences to the family of our security detail of Mexico, Mr. Morales, thank you for everything that you've done for the team, you will be missed," the statement read.

Beyond all the drama, intrigue and financial complications of being a band, Fuerza Regida is still rising in the music industry – and reinvigorating cultural pride among many Mexican Americans. The group's ascent is especially remarkable in a time when the Supreme Court has allowed the Department of Homeland Security to factor in race, language (Spanish), accent and job type when conducting immigration sweeps that have been targeting Latinos across the U.S. In some cases, federal agents have brutally targeted U.S. citizens of Latino descent who have asserted their legal status.

"I think the genre itself, the Mexican music genre really helped Mexicans be cool," said JOP – who used to bump songs by Chalino and Adán Sánchez on his way to school in San Bernardino, but then lower the volume as he got closer to campus. Most of his classmates, himself included, preferred to listen to hip-hop back then. "Now [people] are bumping Mexican music, they don't even know Spanish."

JOP spends most of his time throughout the day being filmed by a member of his team. With a personal YouTube channel that counts over 1 million followers, the singer is searching for the sweet spot between the music industry and the influencer economy, the latter of which is worth $250 billion and counting, according to a 2023 report by Goldman Sachs.

It's a desirable business to break into, but JOP says his round-the-clock filming has a simpler origin.

"When I was young, my mom never recorded me, so I don't got no recordings," he said. He's the only child of a mother who struggled with infertility; when she was pregnant with him, she prayed for his survival, promising to name him after Jesus Christ. "[I'm a] miracle baby, that's why we blessed," he said with a smile.

JOP said his mom had long hoped he would go to college. Yet after he graduated from Arroyo Valley High School in 2015, his main focus became pursuing music.

"I told her, when the leaves fall, I'll be in college," he said. "She told me one day: 'The leaf fell [and] I don't see you in college.'"

In December, JOP would get a taste of the scholarly life when Fuerza Regida headed to Harvard University to accept the Harvard-Radcliffe RAZA Trailblazer Award from a student organization for their advancement of Mexican music. Although it was not related to an honorary degree, the band members were each gifted caps and gowns to wear.

"There you go, a Harvard graduate," JOP jokingly told The Times.

In an entertainment industry that rewards cheap gimmicks and surface-level solidarity with marginalized people, JOP's cutting realness is a cornerstone of his identity as an artist. For many, he represents an underdog spirit inherent to working-class communities.

When the wildfires ripped through Southern California last January, Fuerza Regida rented a hotel to house families who were displaced. Then amid the ICE raids in the summer, the band donated merchandise profits to organizations such as the Immigrant Defenders Law Center, which covers legal fees for affected individuals. In the fall, Fuerza Regida and Street Mob Records awarded four full scholarships for Cal State San Bernardino students and provided free meals to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries when the government shutdown delayed the distribution of benefits.

By the end of 2025, its members launched the Fuerza Music Foundation in an effort to build lasting social change in immigrant communities. "Before [we] ever got nominated [for any award], I think we've been nominated by the community, by the hood," said JOP.

The language of manifesting your dreams into reality might sound nonsensical or contrived, but to JOP, his magical thinking became his saving grace.

"My dad [would always say] 'Get to work,'" recalled JOP. "My mom [would say] 'Mijo, go to college, [or] you're just going to be singing to drunks.'

"And now, I do sing to borrachos," he added. "Seventy-thousand of those m----------."

11 must-watch music documentaries coming to theaters and streaming in 2026

By CHARLIE VARGAS and HOLLY ALVARADO
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Kaiden J. Yu / The Philadelphia Inquirer / TNS

RZA of Wu-Tang Clan speaks to the audience during a concert at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia on July 18, 2025. The hip-hop group and the creation of their album "Once Upon a Time in Shaolin" will be the subject of the documentary "The Disciple," slated for wider theatrical release this year after its premiere at the Sundance Film Festival.

Music documentaries have long offered more than just behind-the-scenes access.

At their best, they serve as time capsules, preserving pivotal moments in culture while peeling back the layers of the artists who helped shape them. From intimate portraits of reinvention to deep dives into eras that altered the course of popular music, the genre continues to evolve alongside the stories it tells.

In 2026, a new slate of music documentaries promises to do just that, spotlighting artists at moments of transformation, reckoning, and creative rebirth. Whether revisiting legendary careers or examining the fleeting intensity of modern pop, these films offer music lovers a chance to experience the stories behind the sound.

Here are 11 music documentaries to add to your watch list in 2026.

'Ann Wilson – In My Voice'

Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee Ann Wilson is ready to tell her story in her own words. Wilson's upcoming documentary, " Ann Wilson – In My Voice, " chronicles the life of one of the most iconic singers who brought us "Crazy On You," "Barracuda" and "Magic Man."

The documentary's announcement states that the film draws from a "personal archive of home movies, photographs, journals, and never-before-seen footage." Wilson will give additional commentary from friends, family members, music executives, and fellow bandmates.

"This film is my story in my own words, told the way I've always wanted to tell it. I can't wait to take you behind the scenes of my music and my story," Wilson wrote in an Instagram post about the film.

Although the post mentioned it is slated for this year, no details have been shared on an exact release date.

Stuart C. Wilson / Getty Images / TNS

Courtney Love attends the "Moonage Daydream" London premiere at BFI IMAX Waterloo on Sept. 5, 2022, in London. Love is the subject of the documentary "Antiheroine," an official selection of the 2026 Sundance Film Festival.

'The Best Summer'

Tamra Davis, known for her insightful documentary on Kathleen Hanna of Bikini Kill and Le Tigre, is back with a new project that also dusts off rare archival footage. The film features behind-the-scenes looks at some of the most prominent up-and-coming indie-rock and punk bands of the '90s. Some of the acts include the Beastie Boys, Sonic Youth, Foo Fighters, Pavement, Rancid, Beck, the Amps, and some more Bikini Kill.

The inspiration for the film came after Davis evacuated from the Palisades fires last January and discovered a box of videotapes she shot in 1995 at Summersault, a little-known Australian indie music festival.

"The Best Summer" tells an oral and visual history of the tour, featuring performances, candid interviews, and never-before-seen backstage footage. The documentary serves as a nostalgic time capsule of archival footage from 30 years earlier, capturing a moment in time before the groups' launch into stardom.

According to Billboard, Davis' film will be available to view online after its Sundance premiere between Jan. 22-Feb. 1.

'Broken English'

The British Invasion is often associated with the groups that led the charge onto American charts, including the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who, the Kinks and others. Among the leading female acts of the British Invasion was the late singer and actress Marianne Faithfull. While she was a popular figure in the musical movement taking over America, much of her success was overshadowed by personal problems in the '70s, when she became anorexic, homeless and addicted to heroin.

Faithfull's signature, distinctive, melodic, high-register vocals had defined her career, but her voice was permanently altered by severe laryngitis and her persistent drug abuse. After nearly a decade, Faithfull made a musical comeback in 1979 with the release of a critically acclaimed seventh studio album, "Broken English." The album signified a resurgence of her musical career, earning her a Grammy Award nomination for Best Female Rock Vocal Performance, and is now the title of the upcoming documentary.

"Broken English" stars Faithfull (before she passed away last year at 78), alongside Tilda Swinton, George MacKay, Sophia Di Martino, Zawe Ashton, and Calvin Demba. Additional appearances include Nick Cave, Warren Ellis, Jehnny Beth, Courtney Love, Suki Waterhouse, and Beth Orton.

The documentary dramatizes Faithfull's life and career by presenting real events and framing them within the fictionalized group, known as the "Ministry of Not Forgetting," composed of Swinton and MacKay, to explore and correct the often-misrepresented legacy of the singer.

Although the film was released at a few film festivals last year, its U.S. theatrical debut is scheduled for March 20.

'The Disciple'

Wu-Tang Clan is among the most prolific rap groups in the genre's history. In her directorial debut, Joanna Natasegara dives into the legends and myths surrounding Wu-Tang Clan's 2015 album "Once Upon a Time in Shaolin." There was only ever one copy of the album created, an intentional choice by RZA, the leader of the group, and Dutch Moroccan rapper and producer Cilvaringz, who felt the streaming age was cheapening music.

Natasegara tells the story of how Cilvaringz, as an outsider, worked his way into Wu-Tang's inner circle to craft the album that sparked discussions about art's material value and controversy over who gets to own rare art.

The only copy of the album was sold in 2015 for $2 million to Martin Shkreli, the disgraced CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals. It remains the most expensive piece of music ever sold, after NFT company PleasrDAO bought it for $4 million. The album can only be legally played at private listening parties and is barred from use for any commercial purpose until 2130.

'Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D)'

Billie Eilish, known for megahits such as "Lovely," "Bad Guy" and "Birds of a Feather," is teaming up with director James Cameron for her next documentary project. According to The Hollywood Reporter, Eilish first teased the project over the summer during a sold-out concert in Manchester, England, but couldn't share many details beyond the fact that it was a 3D collaboration with the Oscar-winning director known for "Titanic," "The Terminator" and the "Avatar" franchise.

"So you may have noticed that there are more cameras than usual in here," she told the crowd at the time. "Basically, I can't say much about it, but what I can say is that I'm working on something very, very special with somebody named James Cameron, and it's going to be in 3D. So, take that as you will, and these four shows here in Manchester, you and I are part of a thing that I am making with him. He's in this audience somewhere, just saying. So don't mind that, and also I'll probably be wearing this exact outfit for like four days in a row."

Eilish's previous documentaries include "Billie Eilish: The World's a Little Blurry," directed by R.J. Cutler, and the concert movie "Happier Than Ever: A Love Letter to Los Angeles."

"Hit Me Hard and Soft: The Tour (Live in 3D)" is scheduled to be released in theaters on March 20.

'Take That'

When it comes to classic '90s boy bands, the English group Take That is one of the stars. The group successfully climbed the charts with their combination of catchy pop hits with heartthrob appeal. However, just a little over a decade into their budding career that captured millions, the band split. Now, a three-part Netflix documentary, dubbed "Take That," will take fans and viewers back to the group's beginnings in the early '90s, through the present day, and chart their rise, reunion, and transition into a three-piece act.

The documentary features interviews with the three remaining musicians, Gary Barlow, Howard Donald and Mark Owen, while former bandmates Robbie Williams and Jason Orange will be featured in archival footage. The series was directed by David Soutar, who has worked on music documentaries for acts such as Ed Sheeran and Bros. "Take That" will stream on Netflix on Jan. 27.

'Antiheroine'

Few figures loom as large – or as polarizing – in alternative rock history as Courtney Love.

The former "Hole" singer, songwriter, and actor helped define the sound and attitude of 1990s alt-rock, often commanding as much attention for her public persona as for her music. "Antiheroine," a new documentary slated to drop this year, aims to shift that narrative by allowing Love to tell her story on her own terms.

Set against the backdrop of her life in London, where Love relocated in 2019, the film traces her evolution as an artist, mother, and cultural figure. While her marriage to Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain inevitably factors into the story, the documentary positions it as only one chapter in a much larger, more complex life shaped by fame, loss, addiction, and survival.

The film features appearances from longtime peers and collaborators, including Green Day frontman Billie Joe Armstrong, former R.E.M. singer Michael Stipe, and Hole bandmates Melissa Auf der Maur and Patty Schemel.

"Antiheroine" is scheduled to make its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival between Jan. 22 and Feb. 1.

'The Moment'

"The Moment" captures Charli XCX at the height of her pop-culture takeover, offering a stylized, mockumentary-style look at a fictionalized version of her explosive summer 2024 rise. Conceived by Charli and directed by longtime collaborator Aidan Zamiri, the film blends real concert footage with scripted scenes to explore fame, pressure, and the chaos behind the scenes.

Rather than presenting a straightforward portrait of stardom, the documentary leans into the strange in-between spaces of pop life, backstage hours, rehearsals, and the emotional whiplash of being both celebrated and scrutinized in real time. It's a self-aware examination of what it means to "be the moment," and the inevitability that it won't last forever.

The film features a stacked cast of cameos, including Alexander Skarsgård, Kylie Jenner, Rachel Sennott, Rosanna Arquette, and Jamie Demetriou, adding to its sharp, satirical edge. The Moment is set to premiere at the Sundance Film Festival before arriving in theaters worldwide in late January.

'Man on the Run'

The newest Paul McCartney documentary takes fans on a ride of his creative rebirth in the years following the breakup of the Beatles, tracing his transition from one of the most famous musicians in the world to an artist rebuilding himself on his own terms. The documentary focuses on the formation of Wings with his wife, Linda McCartney, and the challenges of defining a new musical identity in the 1970s.

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Morgan Neville, the film draws from extensive interviews with McCartney, his personal journals, and Linda McCartney's photographs, offering an intimate look at a period often overshadowed by Beatlemania. Rare archival footage and previously unseen material help illuminate the doubts, risks, and reinvention that shaped McCartney's solo career.

Man on the Run premiered in 2025 and will screen in select theaters before arriving worldwide on streaming beginning Feb. 25, 2026.

Earth, Wind & Fire

A new documentary directed by Questlove will explore the legacy and lasting cultural impact of Earth, Wind & Fire, one of the most influential bands in American music history. Founded by Maurice White, the group helped shape the sound of funk, soul, R&B, and pop while delivering a message rooted in spirituality, unity, and joy.

The film examines the band's expansive body of work through rare and previously unseen archival material, drawing from visual, audio, and written records with the full support of the band and White's estate. Rather than functioning as a traditional career overview, the documentary aims to contextualize Earth, Wind & Fire's music within the broader cultural and social movements that surrounded it. Following acclaimed projects such as "Summer of Soul" and "Sly Lives! (aka The Burden of Black Genius)," Questlove brings his historian's eye to a story that has long deserved deeper exploration.

The Earth, Wind & Fire documentary is set to air on HBO sometime later this year.

'Bowie In Berlin'

"Bowie In Berlin" studies one of the most transformative periods in David Bowie's career, when he retreated from fame and relocated to Berlin between 1976 and 1978. Seeking distance from the pressures of stardom and a reset both personally and creatively, Bowie's time in the city would ultimately lead to the creation of Low, Heroes, and Lodger, collectively known as the Berlin Trilogy.

The documentary uses archival footage and rare interviews with four women who played pivotal roles during Bowie's Berlin years, offering an intimate perspective on a side of the artist rarely seen by the public. Their reflections frame a period of deep artistic reinvention, as Bowie shed his theatrical personas and began performing as himself rather than through characters.

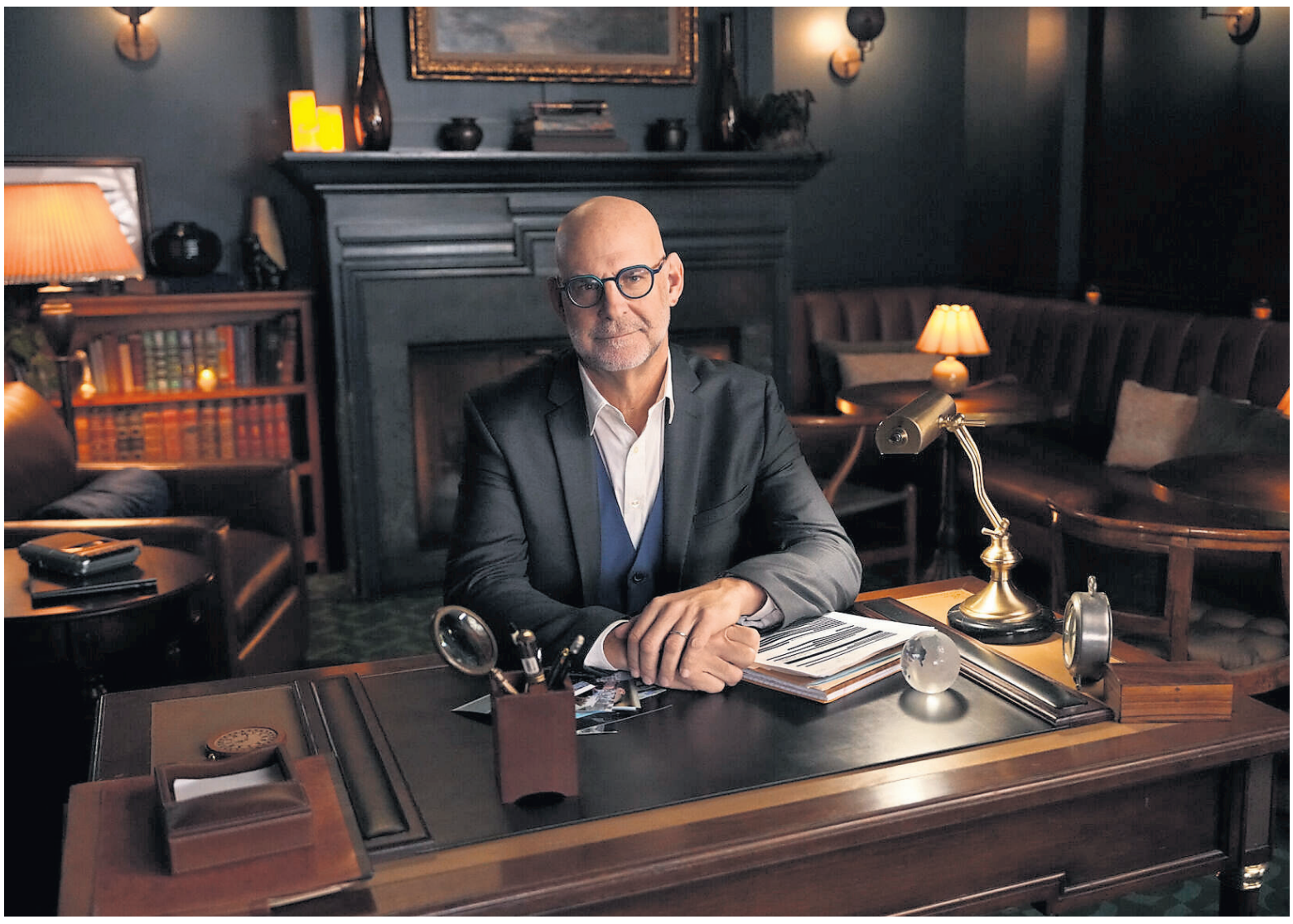
Directed by longtime Bowie documentarian Francis Whately, the film places Berlin at the center of Bowie's regeneration, capturing a moment when he hit a personal low while simultaneously producing some of the most influential work of his career.

"Bowie In Berlin" is set to air on BBC Two and BBC iPlayer in autumn 2026.

Want to solve a mystery this winter?

4 new series will test your sleuthing skills

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)



Robert Voets / CBS / TNS

Author Harlan Coben hosts the docuseries "Final Twist" on CBS, one of four mysteries that have recently premiered.

Netflix / TNS

Jon Bernthal, left, and Tessa Thompson in "His & Hers."

It's 2026 and the bullies have taken over the school, but justice is still being done on television. For whatever psychological reasons I am not equipped to explain, this usually involves murder. And so we begin the new year in a flurry of mysteries.

The name of internationally bestselling mystery machine Harlan Coben is attached to two of these, one fiction, one non. Coben himself appears as the onscreen host of "Harlan Coben's Final Twist," a documentary true-crime series, which began Wednesday on CBS (it also streams on Paramount+). Like his dozens of novels – the latest a collaboration with Reese Witherspoon – it involves a, wait for it, final twist, though as a writer he'd never create characters so unglamorous. The first episode, "Billy & Billie Jean," details a 2012 double homicide in Mountain City, Tennessee, made unusual by a string of unpredictable deceptions and manipulations; I won't go into detail, but it's weird.

People eat these shows like candy, and while candy can rot your teeth and put on pounds, it can also deliver a jolt of guilty pleasure and feed a sugar addiction. As far as I can tell, not being a connoisseur of the genre but having some experience of it, "Final Twist" is pretty much a Thing of Its Kind, not substantially different from "Dateline" or "48 Hours," and with those words you may already know if you'll like it. For me, the best thing about such shows are the (honest) detectives and (capable) lawyers happy to talk about an old, successfully concluded case, and how little any of it resembles what crime fiction throws at you.

"Harlan Coben's Run Away," now streaming from Netflix, which has a multimillion-dollar, five-year deal to adapt Coben novels – this one from 2019 – concerns a father looking for his daughter (like "Taken," I hear you say). As in the previous Netflix productions "Harlan Coben's Missing You," "Harlan Coben's Stay Close" and "Harlan Coben's Fool Me Once," the location has been shifted from the United States to the north of England, which has the paradoxical quality of seeming more realistic just by being less familiar. (The Netflix deal has also produced Coben series in Spain, Poland and France, available to watch domestically as well.)

Three flavors of investigators combine here: the citizen detective, the private detective and the police detective. The first is Simon Greene (James Nesbitt, who also starred, as a different character, in 2021's "Stay Close"), whose daughter Paige (Ellie de Lange) went off to university and got addicted to heroin; when the person he believes to be her dealer/boyfriend winds up messily dead, Simon – earlier caught beating him up on video – becomes a prime suspect. (His quick temper does him no favors.) A well-to-do worker in finance, he is ready to spread a lot of money around, and make some dodgy connections, to find her.

Second is private investigator Elena Ravenscroft (Ruth Jones), working on a different missing child case, for a different father. (Annette Badland, the medical examiner on "Midsomer Murders," plays her tech genius, Lou.) And third are Mutt and Jeff police detectives Isaac Fagbenle (Alfred Enoch) and Ruby Todd (Amy Gledhill), looking into that murder and a string of killings with no apparent connection, some of which we'll see committed by good-looking young psychos Dee Dee (Maeve Courtier-Lilley) and Ash (Jon Pointing), not just for cheap thrills. All these threads, obviously, are bound for a single knot.

Also in the mix are wife Ingrid (Minnie Driver), a doctor who will spend a chunk of the series in a medically induced coma; their other children, Sam (Adrian Greensmith), also away at school, and younger daughter Anya (Ellie Henry); and James' sister-in-law and business partner Yvonne (Ingrid Oliver). Lucian Msamati plays Cornelius, a sort of guardian angel for Paige, his sometime neighbor.

Nesbitt, overheated, paranoid, jealous – it can become as tiring to the viewer as it is to the people around him – will get many things wrong before anyone sets him right. This is, of course, a regular feature of mysteries or else they'd all be over in five minutes, but there is an especially high level of mistakenness and misdirection here. The Big Idea at the bottom of it is novel enough, but even though it has real-world precedents, it does inch across the line between clever and goofy. (There's a cult.) The solution that might have come to your mind along the way will have slipped it by the time the show, with more twists than a complete set of Chubby Checker LPs, gets around to confirming it. The ending, naturally, will surprise you; it certainly does Simon.

There are many good performances, but I was especially fond of Jones (co-creator and co-star, with James Corden, of the much-loved "Gavin & Stacey"), whose no-nonsense shamus could support a show of her own, and Gledhill, as the only character allowed to display any sort of cheeriness – a necessary leavening agent over eight dark episodes.

Contrariwise, "His & Hers," which premiered Thursday, also on Netflix, from a novel by U.K. author Alice Feeney, has been transatlantically transplanted to a small town a drive away from Atlanta (Feeney, who has written eight novels since 2018, is seemingly on track to be another Coben, who blurbs her.) Compared with the naturalistic "Run Away," calmly rendered apart from Simon's sweaty outbursts, it's something of a high-volume potboiler, including a smattering of (demurely pictured) sex, mostly of the hot and meaningless variety.

Jon Bernthal plays Det. Jack Harper, back working in his hometown after flaming out elsewhere, living as the responsible adult with an adorable little niece and her depressed, alcoholic mother, Zoe (Marin Ireland). ("Vodka's cheaper than Ambien," says Zoe.) He has a mother-in-law, Alice (Crystal Fox), who may be losing her memory and upon whom he helpfully visits, and a smart new partner, Priya (Sunita Mani), whom he calls "Boston," in the way characters in fiction often nickname people by where they come from.

Tessa Thompson plays Anna Andrews, a former Atlanta anchorwoman looking to reclaim her chair after a year away, currently occupied by blond Lexy (rhymes with sexy) Jones (Rebecca Rittenhouse). (Anna, who is Black, asks her boss, who isn't, "How do you suddenly make that woman the face of the station ... in Atlanta?") Unable to talk herself back into her old job, she gets herself dispatched as a field reporter to cover a murder in what happens to be her old hometown. It happens also to be that of her estranged husband, who happens to be Det. Harper, with whom she happens to share a family trauma.

She also happens to know the victim – as does Jack – the wife of a local, older rich man (Chris Bauer), a stock character in these things. And the cameraman she brings with her, Richard (Pablo Schreiber), just so happens to be married to Lexy. (So much happenstance.) She's a story-first, people-second kind of reporter – you know the type – but Feeney, who worked as a producer and journalist at the BBC for many years, is at least not working from a position of ignorance.

The series begins with lines from the novel: "There are at least two sides to every story. Yours and mine. Ours and theirs. His and hers. Which means someone is always lying." This isn't true – one can be wrong without lying, and memory is malleable. But in the motion pictures, however many viewpoints and untruths and red herrings are thrown at you, and however much the characters disagree, there's usually just one side in the end – the "facts" that have played out onscreen. Feeney's book features multiple narrators, but relativity is not an idea the series bothers to develop. (It isn't "Rashomon.") Still, these people do lie – a lot – which serves them no better than it did Pinocchio.

As more murders pile up, seemingly targeting Anna's old high school clique, emotions run high all around. Jack is so blustery, so loudly and quickly dismissive of Priya's good ideas, that the phrase "doth protest too much" springs to mind. (As does, "Simmer down, Jon Bernthal.") Some clues planted along the way may lead a viewer to the correct solution – I am not one of them – which is oddly similar to that of "Run Away." Both series also end around a dinner table. Coincidence, it's everywhere.

Most to my taste is "Bookish," an episodic British import beginning Sunday on PBS. Created by and starring Mark Gatiss, a many-credited writer and actor, with roots in British comedy, sci-fi and mystery – with Steven Moffat, he co-created "Sherlock," in which he played Mycroft Holmes, and is the author of nine "Doctor Who" screenplays. It's a traditional sort of U.K. series, a well-dressed postwar period piece with an eccentric detective at its center. Gatiss plays Gabriel Book, an antiquarian bookseller with a "hobby" in crime-solving, joining the ranks of consulting and amateur sleuths so dear to British crime fiction – Marple, Wimsey, Holmes, Paul Temple, Father Brown, et al.

Soft-spoken, kindly and literary – lots of quotations are worked into his dialogue – he has gathered a little crew around him: a wife named Trottie (Polly Walker, who contributed to the writing), who runs a wallpaper shop adjacent to his bookstore on a cobblestone London lane; a dog called Dog; Nora (Buket Kömür), a girl from across the lane who hangs out and helps out; and a new assistant, Jack (Connor Finch), arriving fresh from prison with no idea why he's been summoned there. (He quickly proves right for the job, in and out of the store.) Book also has a refreshingly friendly relationship with Scotland Yard inspector Bliss (Elliot Levey) and the authority of a never-shown "letter from Churchill" that allows him free access to crime scenes, to the evident displeasure of uniformed Sgt. Morris (Blake Harrison). (There may be more behind this enmity.) The production is naturalistic, with bits of expressionist neo-noir worked in when a crime is being described.

Like the best, by which I mean my favorite such series, it's humorous and fun, while also being human and sad. Personal business among the principals develops over the course of the season's three stories (each presented in two episodes); a second series has already been ordered, thanks much.

'Harlan Coben's Final Twist'

Rating: TV-14

How to watch: Wednesdays on CBS (and streaming on Paramount+)

'Run Away'

Rating: TV-MA

How to watch: Netflix

'His & Hers'

Rating: TV-MA

How to watch: Netflix

'Bookish'

Rating: TV-14

How to watch: Premieres Jan. 11 on PBS

Ben Blackall / Netflix / TNS

James Nesbitt, left, and Minnie Driver in "Run Away."

BOOKS

Jeff Kamin leads a discussion last month about "The God of the Woods" at Books and Bars held at Utepils Brewing in Minneapolis.
Carlos Gonzalez / The Minnesota Star Tribune / TNS

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, Jan. 3, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. The Correspondent. Virginia Evans. Crown
2. Alchemised. SenLinYu. Del Rey
3. The Widow. John Grisham. Doubleday
4. The Secret of Secrets. Dan Brown. Doubleday
5. The Intruder. Freida Mcfadden. Poisoned Pen
6. Brimstone (deluxe ed.). Callie Hart. Forever
7. We Who Will Die (deluxe ed.). Stacia Stark. Avon
8. Mona's Eyes. Thomas Schlesser. Europa
9. Always Remember. Charlie Mackesy. Penguin Life
10. Quicksilver (deluxe ed.). Callie Hart. Forever

Hardcover nonfiction

1. 1929. Andrew Ross Sorkin. Viking
2. Stop, in the Name of God. Charlie Kirk. Winning Team
3. Nobody's Girl. Virginia Roberts Giuffre. Knopf Publishing
4. Good Things. Samin Nosrat. Random House
5. How to Test Negative for Stupid. John Kennedy. Broadside
6. The Look. Michelle Obama. Crown
7. The Miracles Among Us. Marc Siegel. Harper Influence
8. The Pioneer Woman Cooks: The Essential Recipes. Ree Drummond. Morrow
9. Puzzle Mania! Joel Fagliano. Authors Equity
10. The Overthinker's Guide to Making Decisions. Joseph Nguyen. Authors Equity

Trade paperback

1. Theo of Golden. Allen Levi. Atria
2. In Your Dreams. Sarah Adams. Dell
3. Dungeon Crawler Carl. Matt Dinniman. Ace
4. The Housemaid. Freida McFadden. Grand Central
5. The God of the Woods. Liz Moore. Riverhead
6. Solo Leveling, Vol. 14. Chugong. Ize
7. The Atomic Habits Workbook. James Clear. Avery
8. Caught Up. Liz Tomforde. Entangled
9. The Surrogate Mother. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
10. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

Does your **book club** have *problems*?

Facilitators tackle 'behavioral issues'

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

MINNEAPOLIS — On occasion, what a book club needs most is for one person to tell another person to shut up.

That's when a book club facilitator could help.

"When a club wants a facilitator, it's usually because of behavioral issues," said Cindy Kalland, who lives in Eden Prairie and is a retired teacher. "It may just be that they're missing something – that no one is doing the work – but I think the biggest thing that annoys people in book clubs is when there is a member who dominates too much."

Kalland didn't know book club facilitators were a thing until 2008, when she heard that a friend's club – one that Oak Ridge Country Club in Hopkins had begun for its members – needed a new one. Facilitators generally participate in the selection of titles, do research to enrich the discussion, compile reviews, keep things moving along and, sometimes, urge a member to share less.

"I would pull someone aside and say, 'Maybe just step back a bit and let someone else talk' or 'I noticed you bristling a bit when someone said something. Maybe just watch that,'" said Kalland. "I tried to be nice. Teachers call them 'hamburger compliments': 'You're really smart. But would you mind watching out for this behavior? But I really appreciate what you add to the group.' You put the hamburger between two compliments."

Possibly, the monopolizer doesn't realize they're monopolizing.

"If someone is taking over the conversation, I do sometimes have to take over the microphone and say, 'Now, let's give someone else a chance,'" said Jeff Kamin, who founded Books & Bars. Its 50 or more attendees meet at breweries in Minneapolis and St. Paul to chat about books while they wait for the foam on their beers to subside.

Alice Moody, who founded the Chicago-based Between the Covers, which leads book discussions among other bibliophilic activities, said she doesn't run into that many people who won't cede the floor. But, like comedians and hecklers, figuring out how to politely deal with those folks is part of the job.

"There are those times someone will say, 'What are you talking about? That didn't happen," said Moody, whose group also offers other services, including book suggestions and advice on starting a club. "That's part of a facilitator's role, to say, 'Let's give that person a break.' I'm literally making sure everyone feels comfortable sharing their reactions."

All three facilitators are essentially self-taught. Like Kalland, Moody is a former educator, whereas Kamin has experience in improv comedy and broadcasting. All three see research as the backbone of their work, since anyone can go online and get a bunch of discussion questions (although be warned; Kalland says those questions are often "dumb").

Kalland isn't facilitating right now – she used to moderate several clubs a month – but still has huge stacks of background materials on popular titles such as Brit Bennett's "The Vanishing Half" and Amor Towles' "The Lincoln Highway." She charged $150 per meeting, a fee generally divided among the attendees. Kamin accepts tips, but Books & Bars is free. Moody charges $400 for a 90-minute session.

Just as every reader has a unique take on a book, each facilitator has a different emphasis. Kalland urges groups to explore the differences between good and excellent writing. Moody says one of her strengths is making connections between different types of literature.

Kamin likes getting reluctant chatters to participate by using ice breakers related to the month's book, such as "What's the scariest book you ever read?" when Books & Bars tackled Grady Hendrix 's horror novel "The Final Girl Support Group."

He said the benefit of Books & Bars is similar to a more traditional club that meets in members' homes. "One of my favorite things to hear, which I hear from a lot of people, is, 'You know what? I never would have picked this on my own and I wasn't sure of it but I'm glad this group challenges me to read outside my comfort zone,'" Kamin said.

All three agree that plenty of book clubs (like Kalland's own) work just fine on their own, without need for a facilitator. But Moody says a few signs indicate when one could help.

"When people aren't getting out of it what they hoped to get out of it, saying, 'I wanted to talk about that but we didn't get to it,' 'It seemed like we talked about everything but the book this month' or 'We always read the same books,'" Moody said. In those cases, she said an expert – someone who doesn't know anyone in the group – will have ideas.

Those experts can profit from their own advice about not dominating, of course. Kamin said the best Books & Bars events are the ones where everyone else is talking so much that he barely hears his own voice.

"Just like when I was a teacher and wanted the kids to be engaged, I don't want this to be 'The Cindy Show,'" Kalland agreed.

With or without a facilitator, sometimes what readers in a club need is to remind themselves why they're there, which is to share something they love: books.

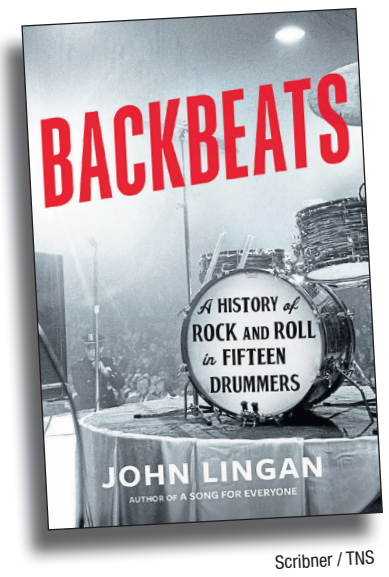
REVIEW

You love their music, now find out who these musicians are

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

Jeff Wheeler / The Minnesota Star Tribune / TNS

Roots co-founder Questlove, pictured at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in 2016, is one of 15 drummers featured in "Backbeats."



Scribner / TNS

If you're a music fan who hasn't thought much about drumming (I'm guilty on both counts), "Backbeats" will be a revelation.

Amateur drummer John Lingan divides his book into 15 chapters about 15 drummers. They're not his favorites, he says, but they're the ones he thinks have had the most impact on rock music. To get this weakness out of the way, the book is very light on female drummers, including just one (Moe Tucker of Velvet Underground) and not even parenthetically mentioning Karen Carpenter.

The Carpenters singer/drummer is a surprising omission not just because she blazed trails but also because Lingan's generous book beats the drum for so many musicians beyond its 15 stars.

Each chapter has a bit of biographical information about its main character, but Lingan is not didactic about sticking to his subjects, having admitted in his introduction that he could easily have picked different drummers. He's always willing to follow his passions. Neither Bun E. Carlos nor Keith Moon gets a chapter, for instance, but we learn how much Lingan loves Carlos' work on the "Cheap Trick at Budokan" album and Lingan devotes a big chunk of the chapter on Led Zeppelin's John Bonham to the Who's Moon.

All of these people could maintain a beat, of course, but the revelation in "Backbeats," subtitled "A History of Rock and Roll in Fifteen Drummers," is how much more they did to make classic songs endure.

Lingan is adept at describing distinctive sounds. Of Al Jackson Jr.'s playing on Booker T. and the M.G.'s iconic "Green Onions," Lingan writes that "it's not the first thing people think of when they think of 'Green Onions,' but the drums give the song its danger, too, its military stride." And Lingan describes how Wrecking Crew drummer Hal Blaine's unorthodox percussion included "adding a ticking beat to 'God Only Knows' that he played on taped-up orange juice bottles and keeping a soft tempo on 'Caroline, No' using an upturned water jug and a mallet." You'll want to keep a phone or iPad handy while you read, so you can listen along.

Lingan is great on musical phenomena that fans may have noticed but not been able to put their fingers on: how drum sounds on just about every hit record changed in the '80s, when drummers stopped recording them in padded studios and switched to wide-open warehouses. How Gene Krupa's virtuosity on "Sing Sing Sing" assured that it "wasn't only a fun dance tune; it was the sound of a musician setting his instrument free." How Clyde Stubblefield created Lingan's all-time favorite drum part on James Brown's "Give It Up or Turnit a Loose," a "monumental" sound in which his "bass drum is like a mammoth's leg slamming to earth, his snare like Paul Bunyan's axe."

One theme of the book is that its drummers' work lives on not just because of the songs they played but because, in the sampling era, many of their sounds have been used and reused, not always with proper credit. Stubblefield's "Funky Drummer" beat has been on literally thousands of records, but he never got paid because James Brown didn't acknowledge his contribution. ("Backbeats" includes a sweet story about Prince acknowledging the debt by paying Stubblefield's medical bills.)

Like a talented drummer's work, Lingan's writing slides throughout the book, underscoring its themes and occasionally popping out to dazzle us. Like Questlove, who gets a chapter for his work with the Roots and others, he demonstrates that he's a practitioner who's also a scholar and a superfan.

AUTOMOTIVE

2025 in the rearview mirror

Taking a look back at last year's top automotive stories

By GRANT SCHWAB, BREANA NOBLE, LUKE RAMSETH and SUMMER BALLENTINE
The Detroit News (TNS)

David Guralnick / The Detroit News / TNS

Jim Farley, CEO of Ford Motor Company, poses for a photo in front of a Ford F-150 Lightning during a launch celebration for the all-electric truck at the Rouge Electric Vehicle Center in Dearborn on April 26, 2022. Ford put the brakes on F-150 Lightning production in 2025.

The year 2025 was a pathbreaking one for the auto industry.

That was not wholly unexpected following the triumph of now-President Donald Trump in the 2024 election. But the speed and scale of changes were perhaps unlike anything Michigan's signature sector has seen in a generation.

Tariffs meant to onshore production prompted big domestic investment announcements but immediately hampered supply chains and slashed expected profits by billions of dollars. Federal policy reversals catalyzed a massive retreat on electric vehicles. Ram Trucks announced the return of its hefty Hemi V8 engine in a move that reflected both a desperation to win back customers and the broader state of Trump-driven U.S. auto policy.

The Republican leader and his allies were frequently the center of attention, but many of the biggest storylines were not driven by the feds. Ford Motor Co., for example, moved into its sterling new headquarters. China continued its dizzying growth. Turmoil deepened within the United Auto Workers union.

A lot happened in the past 12 months, and The Detroit News' team of auto writers and editors has gone back to put a bow on several of the most important and memorable developments.

The 'T' words

Tariffs and Trump dominated headlines in 2025. The president's moves to establish historically high import taxes altered all areas of the U.S. economy, especially the international-trade-reliant auto sector.

To begin the year, there were relatively few and small U.S. tariffs on automotive goods following a decades-long embrace of free trade and regional integration. Trump slammed the brakes on that trend.

He frequently and chaotically introduced, delayed, canceled and altered tariff policies throughout the year. Sudden moves left automakers and parts suppliers scrambling, though Trump's message has been consistent: "If you build in the United States, there is no tariff," he often said in 2025.

The president began the year threatening 25 percent tariffs on all imports from Canada and Mexico. Those taxes nearly took effect before eleventh-hour deals in early February led to a pause. A month later, executives from the Detroit Three automakers played a key role in negotiating an industry carveout.

Sector-wide pleas for Trump to take a light touch on tariffs continued but were ultimately unsuccessful. Trump soon announced 25 percent duties on steel and aluminum – which he later raised to 50 percent – and on March 26 unveiled 25 percent tariffs on all U.S. imports of vehicles and auto parts.

Trump deployed those duties using his authority under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which made those tariffs separate from the more legally dubious "Liberation Day" levies he announced a week later. (Michigan's auto industry nevertheless played a co-starring role that day.)

An April estimate from Michigan's Center for Automotive Research suggested that Trump's Section 232 tariffs would combine to cost manufacturers, distributors and customers about $108 billion across the U.S. auto industry and $42 billion for the Detroit Three automakers. That $42 billion amount is nearly triple the combined 2024 profits of Ford, General Motors Co. and Stellantis NV.

The magnitude of those potential costs diminished later in the year as Trump and his administration announced policies to mitigate the tariffs: Partial exemptions for Mexican and Canadian goods; bilateral trade deals with the likes of Japan, the European Union and Korea; and a 3.75 percent tariff rebate on U.S.-assembled vehicles announced during a visit to Michigan.

The auto sector has so far weathered the storm from Trump's tariffs, though there have been significant impacts and responses from around the industry.

For one, there have been new domestic investment announcements. Stellantis, for example, pledged $13 billion in U.S. investment in October. GM announced plans to invest $4 billion to move production from Mexico to three plants in the United States. Ford Motor Co. announced a $2 billion investment in its Louisville Assembly Plant.

The United Auto Workers union, which is frequently at odds with Trump, has mostly cheered the president's tariffs for influencing those kinds of investments. All three companies, however, also scaled back profit expectations due to the policies.

Automakers and suppliers, which tend to have tight operating margins, have had to collaborate and renegotiate as they try to share the burden of new tariff costs. Suppliers also faced a concerning scenario early in 2025 when China responded to U.S. tariffs by temporarily restricting exports of rare-earth minerals.

Vehicle prices for consumers – which did inch to record highs in 2025 – have not spiked as a result of tariffs, but industry experts worry that automakers and dealers will eventually have to cave to cost pressures in the supply chain.

Warren Browne, an auto supplier consultant and former GM executive who worked at the carmaker for 40 years, has projected total U.S. vehicle sales of 16.2 million units in 2025. That is a modest increase over the prior year, but his outlook for 2026 (15.6 million projected units) and 2027 (15.8 million) is less rosy.

EV retreat

Electric vehicle sales surged in September but collapsed after the end of the federal plug-in vehicle tax credit, a part of Trump's campaign promises to end what he described as an "EV mandate."

That also included efforts to repeal a legal finding that allowed the Environmental Protection Agency to regulate tailpipe greenhouse gas emissions, revoke California's permission to set its own stricter regulations that nearly a dozen states had also adopted, and eliminate all federal fuel economy fines.

Even without those fines, the Republican leader unveiled a proposal for lenient new standards during a December event in the Oval Office featuring appearances by Ford CEO Jim Farley and Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa.

In summary, Trump took actions in 2025 aimed at dismantling every major U.S. tailpipe emissions regulation.

The U.S. auto industry was previously racing to embrace a transition to electric vehicles, but the shift proved rocky. Automakers that set lofty EV goals at the start of the decade later urged regulatory relief after consumers were slow to adopt the new powertrain.

John Bozzella, head of the auto industry's top lobbying group in Washington, said in 2024 that Biden-era environmental regulations were at the "ragged edge of achievable." After the Trump administration ended the EV tax credit via the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, previous electrification goals became unequivocally impossible.

The Detroit Three acknowledged losses on EVs in 2025 and used the Trump-era regulatory holiday to announce major investments in continuing gas- and diesel-powered vehicles.

Ford in December said it would take a $19.5 billion write-down as part of a pivot away from EVs. It discontinued the all-electric F-150 Lightning truck, scrapped plans for an electric commercial van and full-size truck for 2028, and moved to dissolve a joint venture with Korean battery partner SK On while converting EV battery plants to make stationary energy storage products instead.

GM reported a $1.6 billion hit in October related to its own EV pivot. That included canceling plans to build electric pickups at Orion Assembly in Michigan, reducing battery module assembly capacity, and ending the development of hydrogen fuel cell technology. The Detroit-based automaker also said it was ending production of electric delivery BrightDrop vans at a plant in Ontario.

Stellantis similarly dialed back its electrification efforts. The transatlantic automaker killed plans for a Ram all-electric pickup, cancelled a Jeep plug-in hybrid truck, and brought back its famous Hemi V-8 gas engine in some vehicles. The brand, amid other USA-tinged advertising from its parent company, called the Hemi return a " Ram-demption."

A joint-venture battery plant Stellantis has with Samsung SDI is pivoting to make energy storage batteries after EV demand fell. And CEO Antonio Filosa says the automaker is more interested in beefing up its hybrid powertrain offerings in the United States going forward, rather than adding to the plug-in lineup.

Profits, sales, stock performance

New tariffs have hit profits at automakers, though they've mostly been able to stave off major cost increases.

Ford is forecasting a net impact of $1 billion in 2025 from tariffs on operating profit as the company moves to find savings on logistics, in supply chain and in other parts of the business. In December, the automaker increased its operating profit guidance to $7 billion for 2025, which would be down more than 30 percent from 2024.

Looking ahead, multiplefires at a major aluminum supplier, scrapped EV products and redeployment of plants for alternative programs will show up in financial reports into 2027.

Ford sales fluctuated throughout 2025, though November was its ninth month of outpacing the industry average. The company in April began offering discounts previously reserved for employees in an effort to buoy consumer confidence amid tariff chaos, but the expiration of the federal plug-in vehicle tax credit has tanked EV sales.

Despite challenges, investors appear optimistic for the automaker's continued growth following significant announcements on its strategy. Its share price is up more than $3 over the past year to $13.28.

GM CEO Mary Barra earlier this year projected total tariff costs to hit between $4 billion and $5 billion, but later lowered estimated costs to closer to $3.5 billion to $4.5 billion. Overall, the automaker weathered rapid market changes profitably, beating analyst expectations in its latest earnings report. The company expects to bring in net profits between $12 billion and $13 billion in 2025. Final profit numbers will be released next year.

The company's sales have been strong throughout the year, and its stock performance has been even stronger. GM's share price began the year at about $51 and currently sits just below $83. That gain is an impressive 60 percent boost since Jan. 1. Tesla Inc., by comparison, is up about 21 percent for the year.

Stellantis' recent profit and sales problems persisted for much of 2025. The company, once among the most profitable automakers in the world, lost $2.7 billion globally in the first half of the year, and its U.S. sales slide continued until the third quarter, when it finally saw year-over-year improvement.

The company board this year sought to restore stability following the dismissal of former CEO Carlos Tavares in 2025. Stellantis installed Filosa, a 25-year veteran of the automaker, as CEO in May after bringing back popular retired executive Tim Kuniskis to lead the Ram brand in December 2024.

Stellantis in October said that it was starting to see signs of commercial progress, but executives have warned their turnaround strategies will be slow to come to fruition. The company's stock price has recovered from a September dip below $9 per share but still appears poised to end the year down more than 13 percent.

China's continued growth

The United States' chief geopolitical rival continued its rapid automotive growth in 2025, boosting its share in key markets and again dominating the global EV sector.

Cutthroat competition in China has led to persistent overproduction, and current conditions have made it nearly impossible for Chinese automakers to turn a profit, according to a Reuters report. But amid that struggle, brands like BYD Co. and SAIC Motor Corp. are making major inroads abroad.

Chinese automakers nearly doubled their market share in the European market during the first half of 2025, now exceeding 5 percent of new vehicle sales, according to data from JATO Dynamics Ltd. In Mexico, imports from China accounted for more than 20 percent of new light-duty vehicle sales in November, per data from Mexican bank Banco BASE. Chinese imports represented close to 0 percent of sales before 2018.

The United States, unlike its allies, still effectively bans the domestic sale of Chinese nameplate vehicles. The European Union has tariffs of up to 35.3 percent on such vehicles but allows their sale and production within member countries. Mexico, amid pressure from the Trump administration, will soon levy 50 percent tariffs on Chinese autos.

Detroit's legacy automakers in the United States, to some extent, ramped up their response in 2025 to Chinese upstarts like BYD.

Ford unveiled its Universal EV Platform and Production System, a long-term move to boost EV competitiveness, even as the company pulls back on some investments. The manufacturing system will leave behind the moving assembly line that founder Henry Ford pioneered more than a century ago and offer a mid-size electric truck starting in 2027 for as low as $30,000 following a $2 billion investment in its Louisville Assembly Plant.

The automaker also announced a partnership with French rival Renault for EVs in Europe and that it would explore commercial vehicle collaboration.

Some automakers have teamed up with Chinese firms: Stellantis started to see the fruits of a partnership with Chinese automaker Leapmotor, for example, with the company's EV sales in Europe growing rapidly in 2025, thanks in part to the existing Stellantis dealer network there.

Plans are in place to execute a similar expansion in South America. Leapmotor's CEO said recently the company aims to sell 1 million cars globally in 2026, and plans to grow that to 4 million in a decade.

HQ moves

Ford in 2025 made a splashy move from its 1 American Road world headquarters to the company's new product development center known as "the Hub" off Oakwood Boulevard across from the Henry Ford Museum. The automaker's once-iconic Glass House headquarters at Southfield Road and Michigan Avenue will be demolished starting next year.

The new digs, executives said, will match a new mentality focused on cross-departmental collaboration between employees and save time traveling across Dearborn for product reviews and meetings.

GM, meanwhile, prepared throughout 2025 to move its HQ out of the Renaissance Center and into the new Hudson's Detroit building downtown. That move is expected to begin in early 2026.

Stellantis saw new signs of life at its sprawling North American base in Auburn Hills, with some new staff added and more time being spent in-office by employees. New CEO Antonio Filosa, who is Italian, said he will be based in Michigan and not Europe.

Recalls

Ford in July set a record for the total number of recalls issued in a single year. As 2025 comes to a close, that number has reached more than 150.

Although warranty costs and repairs hit its financial results throughout the year, results from J.D. Power and Consumer Reports suggest the newest vehicles coming off production lines show marked improvement.

Stellantis recorded the second-most recalls of any manufacturer with 53, and GM ranked third at 27. GM's most notable recall was related to a federal probe of nearly 900,000 trucks and SUVs for engine failures, which drew a June lawsuit. Stellantis experienced a series of high-profile recalls this fall on the Jeep brand's plug-in hybrids.

Owners were especially frustrated by a battery recall for the hybrids that warned them to stop charging and park away from structures following a number of recent vehicle fires – the third time some Jeep drivers had received those instructions in recent years.

The brand's CEO asked owners to "Please accept our sincerest apologies" as the company looks ahead to a clean slate in the new year.

Ford introduces new electronic system to support eyes-free driving

By BREANA NOBLE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Ford Motor Co. says eyes-off and hands-off autonomous driving will be road-ready in 2028, and it'll introduce new artificial intelligence-powered features to its current customers starting this year.

The Dearborn, Mich., automaker introduced the Ford AI assistant and its new vehicle compute center at the massive CES consumer electronics trade show in Las Vegas. The technology takes a similar approach to electric vehicle makers like Tesla Inc. and Rivian Automotive Inc. as well as Chinese automakers capable of offering inexpensive, tech-savvy EVs that executives have warned is a growing threat internationally.

"Our vision for the customer is simple, but not elementary: a seamless layer of intelligence that travels with you between your phone and your vehicle," Doug Field, Ford's chief EV, digital and design officer, said in a blog post. "What customers need is intelligence that understands where you are, what you're doing, and what your vehicle is capable of, and then makes the next decision simpler."

The full architecture will debut on Ford's Universal EV Platform that it started developing in California with its "skunkworks" team. In the $30,000 midsize electric pickup truck that'll launch the platform in 2027, the automaker will control the vehicle's entire hardware and software stack. The in-house development approach provides a more flexible and cheaper system, according to the company.

"I like that they are developing vehicle specific tech that only they can provide as that has value to the vehicle owner and they will be willing to pay for that," David Whiston, analyst at investment firm Morningstar Inc., said in an email.

Over years, automakers increasingly computerized various parts of their vehicles, upping the number of electronic control units often provided by suppliers. These computers control subsystems like seats, brakes and the engine, but with so many of them from various places, it makes it harder to update their software.

The more unified "vehicle brain" in Ford's new architecture is a single, powerful module that centralizes control of infotainment, advanced driver assistance systems, audio and networking. The vertically integrated system is half the size and faster, offering more consistent and reliable service to customers through over-the-air updates, according to Ford.

The system also will a Universal Level 2 and Level 3 ADAS platform that is expected to reduce hands-off Level 2 automated driving costs by 30 percent. The Ford-developed platform also will support eyes-off Level 3 driving by 2028. First appearing on an affordable vehicle also democratizes the technology, Field wrote.

"If a feature doesn't solve a real problem or make you smile, customers shouldn't have to pay for it," he said. "Truly impactful technology must be attainable. If it doesn't reach the many, it isn't a revolution – it's a luxury."

Tesla, Rivian and several Chinese companies have zonal electrical architectures on the road. General Motors Co. began rolling out a zonal electrical architecture in 2023 called its Ultifi platform, though it integrates with the vehicle's existing hardware, which includes many ECUs for different functions. The automaker also plans to launch in 2028 Level 3 driving technology on the Cadillac Escalade IQ SUV, which starts at close to $130,000. Chrysler parent Stellantis NV's zonal architecture is its STLA Brain platform.

"It's a catch-up, but it's a huge statement," Daniel Ives, analyst for investment firm Wedbush Securities Inc., said of Ford. "They're pivoting, especially with AI technology and Ford trying to find opportunities that they could significantly increase their brand and market opportunity across automotive, but also tech."

Ford customers won't completely have to wait for a new vehicle for the benefits of the software it's developing. The Ford AI assistant will begin rolling out to as many as 8 million customers with the Ford and Lincoln app in the first half of 2026.

"Imagine you're at a home improvement store standing in front of a pallet of supplies," Field said. "Instead of guessing or searching for a tape measure, you can simply snap a photo on your phone of the bags of mulch and ask: 'How many of these will fit in my truck bed?' Within seconds, the assistant analyzes the photo, calculates the volume of the bags, and confirms that you can fit 35 of them based on your Ford truck."

The feature will become integrated into Ford's native vehicle systems starting in 2027 on vehicles like the Ford Expedition and Lincoln Navigator SUVs. But launching it in its app first empowers the most customers, said Mike Aragon, president of Ford's Integrated Services software business, harkening to Ford's history with the Model T that first made the automobile accessible to the masses.

Breana Noble / The Detroit News / TNS

Doug Field is Ford Motor Co.'s chief EV, digital and design officer. He introduced the automaker's Ford AI assistant and new computer center at the CES consumer electronics trade show in Las Vegas.

"It allows us to reach millions of Ford customers faster," he wrote in a blog post. "You shouldn't have to wait to buy a brand-new vehicle to experience the future of Ford intelligence. With an in-app launch, we can deliver advanced features and personalized assistance to the Ford you already own."

Ford has been on a seven-plus-year journey to develop its own electronics. Its in-house electronic team has produced 35 million modules – about 10 million per year and growing, Paul Costa, executive director of electronics platforms, said in a blog post. The approach and unifying many modules found in a vehicle into a more centralized system will offer cost savings of 10-15 percent per module, he added. The UEV architecture gives Ford five times more control over critical semiconductors powering the modules.

Software has been a major challenge for the auto industry. Ford last year set a record for recalls in a single year, nearly doubling the previous record, with a large chunk of the notices related to verifying software that fixed previous recalls ended up in the right place. A more unified system will help to ease those kinds of processes.

Emphasizing reduced costs, parts and complexity, Ford in August announced the UEV Platform and Production System, which will have it trading out a three-pronged assembly tree over the traditional Henry Ford-developed moving assembly line. The platform geared toward competing against Chinese competitors will launch at Louisville Assembly Plant in Kentucky, and the facility ended production of the Ford Escape and Lincoln Corsair crossovers in December for retooling.

"We are moving beyond the status quo of generic, fragmented tech," Aragon wrote, "to create a future where your vehicle is as smart, responsive, and personalized as the rest of your life."

AUTO REVIEW

At light speed in the Lucid Gravity – call it CyberVan

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Mrs. Payne and I recently enjoyed "Tron: Ares," an action-packed sci-fi movie featuring lightning-quick light bikes and glowing digital displays.

Then we climbed into our own Tron-mobile.

As I approached the 2025 Lucid Gravity SUV tester with key in pocket, the electric SUV awoke. Door handles popped out to meet us and LED lights wrapped the front and rear ends (what, no Tron-like LEDs ringing the wheels?). We slipped into the interior and big digital screens glowing to life at the touch of the brake pedal.

I selected SWIFT mode on the console and electric motors let out a low, menacing HUMMMMMMM. I toggled the left turn signal, merged into traffic, and mashed the brake pedal.

Holy Mother of Pearl.

ZOT! We were at the next stoplight in an instant. Did the 6,048-pound cyber-ute time travel? Was there an orange, Tron-like streak behind me? Aptly named, the 828-horsepower Gravity defies it. What is this thing?

The 2026 Lucid Gravity is an all-wheel-drive, 6-7 passenger SUV with astonishing performance capabilities.
Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

A 2026 North American Utility of the Year nominee, it's the brilliant creation of Peter Rawlinson – the engineering genius who helped father the Tesla Model S. The mercurial Rawlinson left Tesla Inc. and in 2016 launched Lucid (Latin for "Tesla on Steroids," methinks) as an EV maker before stepping aside last February. As he remains a technical adviser, I trust his spirit lives on – like Jeff Bridges' character in Tron – in the creations he left behind.

In crafting its similar hyper-fast three-row SUV back in 2015, Tesla went big on innovation with gull-wing doors and Full Self-Driving. Lucid just goes big.

This is a Chrysler Pacifica minivan disguised as an electric rocket ship. Call it CyberVan.

To use another movie analogy, the Gravity is like Eddie Murphy in "The Nutty Professor." The SUV plays multiple roles: sports car, minivan, pioneer.

Gravity's Air stablemate is the sexiest, best-looking sedan in the market. You can't take your eyes off it. Gravity shares the Air's signature chromed beak and narrow headlights but is otherwise a big box on 21-inch wheels. Its performance is in part shocking because you don't expect a box to hug the road like a sports car.

It reminded me of Ford's electric SuperVan 4.0 that I rode shotgun in next to CEO Jim Farley around Charlotte Motor Speedway's infield track in 2024. Blinding acceleration, tenacious grip. What is this thing?

Gravity's interior is not just Tron high-tech, but gorgeous too. Its curved 34-inch display reminds of the Porsche Taycan. The dashboard is carefully carpeted in suede, the cabin's lines uninterrupted by big buttons as controls are either subtly located (see the piano-key-like climate controls below the console screen) or in screen. Seats and dash-and-door accents are wrapped in milk-chocolate leather.

Lush appointments aside, Gravity's cabin is utility focused. At 6'5", I could comfortably sit behind myself sitting behind myself in the third row. Want to flatten all three rows like a Pacifica for big cargo like plywood sheets? Gravity has stow 'n' go seats like the Chrysler.

Want to watch the kids play soccer next to the field? The cavernous frunk (front truck) can be turned into a bench seat complete with front fascia protector so your dangling legs don't mar the paint. Carting a junior soccer team home with muddy cleats? Throw them all in the sub-cargo storage in back.

The Model X is a distant second in utility to CyberVan.

Of course, no SUV is capable unless it does road trips – the Achilles heel of three-row EVs like the $56K Kia EV9. The Lucid costs twice that in part because it offers nearly 50 percent more range at an impressive 386 miles.

"Navigate to Charlevoix, Michigan," I barked and the SUV used the "Lucid Network" – a quilt of third-party chargers – to navigate me along the 256-mile route, including Tesla Superchargers since the Lucid shares a NACS port with its EV rival. Nicely done. Another route?

Navigate to Charleston, West Virginia.

Lucid navigated a 381-mile path to my hometown, complete with charging stop.

Unlike Tesla, Lucid offers Android Auto/Apple CarPlay navigation. But, as in the Tesla, I preferred the internal navigation system because it was better at route planning with chargers.

Here's where Tesla asserts its software superiority.

Its nav system creates a universe around its proprietary charger network, allowing me to search for nearby restaurants and stores. You can even set the percentage of battery charge you want left on arrival should you have other errands to run.

Tesla extends that superiority with Full Self-Driving, which enables hands-free driving anywhere – most compellingly on long interstate trips where you can relax while the car automatically changes lanes and navigates to your exit. Gravity only offers adaptive cruise control – which often runs up on traffic, unlike the more advanced Tesla system.

Lucid remains a small startup automaker without the volume of Tesla, which makes the latter's service network as accessible as legacy automakers. I love the Lucid's spare style and blistering performance, but exclusivity comes with a price.

The only Michigan service center? In Coldwater, with the mothership sending out mobile service calls for repairs.

On the Lucid Owners Michigan Forum, Ry4an writes:

I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and the mobile service has been great. Once they came out to my home to cover some post-delivery items and worked from my driveway. Once they came down and traded my touring for a loaner grand touring, swapping back a week later. Never a hassle and comes back beautifully detailed.

My experience with Tesla indicates EVs need minimal maintenance. It's the electronics and (especially) the Lucid's sophisticated seats that may need attention. Another owner named Stratus addressed the issue:

Many of us have a concern, whether we openly admit to it or not. That being said, the Saudi backing certainly seems to give that extra level of long-term security.I will say unequivocally that the car is just so outstanding and fun to drive, that it almost seems too good to fail. I put my worries aside and just went for it and I would wholeheartedly recommend that to anyone pondering a lease or purchase.

Back to my tester. I gripped Gravity's square steering wheel, then ran my thumbs over the touchpad on the left spoke to set my ACC speed. HUMMMMM went the Tron-mobile.

Then I pushed hard on the accelerator and defied ... gravity.

ZOT!

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

2026 Lucid Gravity

★★★★

Vehicle type: Battery-powered, all-wheel-drive, seven-passenger hatchback

Price: $81,550, including $1,650 destination fee ($122,950 Grand Touring as tested)

Powerplant: 89-123 kWh lithium-ion battery with dual-electric-motor drive

Power: 560-828 horsepower, 811-909 pound-feet of torque

Transmission: single-speed automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 3.4 seconds (mfr.); top speed, 137 mph

Weight: 6,048 pounds (as tested)

Fuel economy: EPA est. MPGe: 92-108; range, 386-450 miles

Report card

Highs: Stupefying performance, palatial interior

Lows: Pricey; lags Tesla in charging software, self-driving, service centers

TECHNOLOGY

GADGETS

Vueroid S1 4K Infinite.
Vueroid / TNS

4K dashcam makes use of AI

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Vueroid's latest dashcam, the **S1 4K Infinite** (2-channel), is an industry leader, setting a new standard as the first offering AI-powered license plate recognition. Once an incident occurs, there's nothing better than having dashcam footage. As Vueroid points out in its press release, the S1 dash cam serves as insurance, delivering reliable video recordings when they're needed most.

It's near-impossible to say which dashcam has the clearest, sharpest image, but this one has to be near the top. With its Sony Starvis 2 sensor, the dashcam delivers stunning 4K resolution at 60 frames per second from the front camera, which has a 151-degree wide-angle field of view. The front camera has a 2.3-inch LCD. The rear camera's resolution is 2.5K at 30 fps with a 160-degree field of view. A microSD memory card (with a maximum capacity of 512GB) stores the recordings.

Installation is standard and shouldn't take long with the included hardware kit. If you're not up to the task, a professional installer shouldn't be hard to find. A quick way to get it going is with the included cigarette lighter adapter. Once it's powered up, using it is simple. The buttons on the camera are easy to access and user-friendly for power and mode changes.

Vueroid's proprietary technology enables extensive fine-tuning and customization, with 18 parameters including brightness, sharpness and noise reduction. It has a night-vision mode and Wi-Fi for file transfer.

With the Vueroid Hub app, AI-powered deep learning algorithms restore any unclear video with a few simple taps. License plates captured in motion are often blurred and difficult to definitively read. In just a few steps with the Vueroid Hub app, you select the license plate in question and tell the app to enhance and restore it. It's that easy.

The S1 4K Infinite dashcam ($349.99) is loaded with features to support its unparalleled video quality, including MP4 files that play with ease. A circular polarizing filter is included, which reduces reflections and glare off the windshield for clearer images.

The parking mode with motion detection works in low-power mode to save battery life and includes GPS geofencing to turn it off and save power. When the vehicle is parked safely in a garage, why not save power, for example. The vehicle battery protection mode powers off the dashcam to protect the battery.

Vueroid has an S1 4K Infinite in a 3-channel setup (adding an interior camera) for $399.99, and an S1 4K Infinite 1-channel with the front camera only for $279.99.

https://vueroid.com/product/vueroid-s1-4k-infinite-2ch

Vueroid / TNS
Vueroid S1 4K Infinite.

The **Cyber Acoustics Wireless Headset HS-1500BT II** was a victim this year of getting buried in my office. It's no longer hot off the press but well worth talking about.

It's a premium wireless (Bluetooth) headset with an adjustable padded headband and ultra-soft bio-leatherette earpads, which add comfort for all-day use. There are touch controls for the essentials: volume, mute and answering calls. A boom mic can be worn and used from either side.

Cyber Acoustics Wireless Headset HS-1500BT II.
Cyber Acoustics / TNS

Both office and remote work environments have distractions that create background noise. The HS-1500BT II eliminates almost all of it with dual noise cancellation. With ANC, background noise is removed, and AI noise cancellation eliminates distractions so only your voice comes through to those you are speaking with.

Each ear has a 40mm driver for perfect clarity. With its dual connection features, the headset can seamlessly switch between devices. The internal battery provides up to 20 hours of Bluetooth battery life, and the headset can be used while charging via USB-C. A storage pouch is included.

https://www.cyberacoustics.com/professional-wireless-headset-with-ai-noise-cancelation-hs-1500bt-ii, $129.99

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

How to make the best of a smaller hard drive

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Lately I've been helping my wife deal with a laptop hard drive that's too small.

Whenever we go out, I'm the one who takes the pictures with my phone, but she always asks me to AirDrop the photos to her computer. This is great, but I picked up her MacBook Air used, and it has the minimum amount of storage – 256 gigabytes.

Her previous laptop was an Intel-powered MacBook Pro back from when Apple used 2.5-inch hard drives and you could swap them out for larger ones in just a few minutes. I'd upgraded the storage to 2 terabytes.

When I came home with the newer MacBook Air, my wife was excited – until I told her the storage was tiny.

Instead of migrating all her data to the new Mac, we started fresh and I took the old hard drive out of her previous Mac and put it in a USB enclosure so she can connect it to the new Mac when she wants to copy some files.

So what are some tips for when your hard drive is filling up? Where should you look for files to move or delete?

In my wife's case, photos take up the most space on her laptop.

It is possible to copy your entire photo library off to an external hard drive. This can either be a one-time copy to back up your photos, or you can choose to point your operating system to use the external drive for the main photo library location.

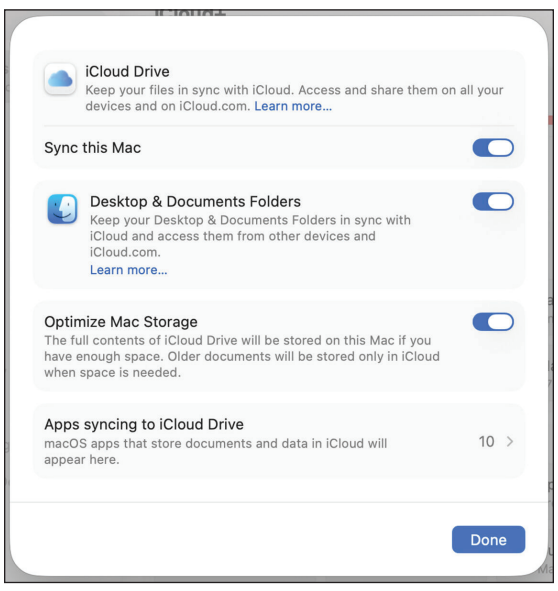
Keeping your photo library on a larger external drive will save a ton of space on your internal drive, but you must remember to connect the drive with the photo library every time you want to access your photos.

You can search the web for instructions on how to move your photo library to an external drive.

Another place to look for space is to utilize cloud storage from Apple, Microsoft and Google.

You can ask Mac OS and Windows to move your Desktop and Documents folders to cloud storage. Every time you save a file to one of those places, it'll be silently copied and stored in the cloud, even though the icon still appears on your computer.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.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Learn more...
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The full contents of iCloud Drive will be stored on this Mac if you have enough space. Older documents will be stored only in iCloud when space is needed.
Apps syncing to iCloud Drive
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Done
Jim Rossman / TNS
You can ask Mac OS and Windows to move your Desktop and Documents folders to cloud storage. Every time you save a file to one of those places, it'll be copied and stored in the cloud, even though the icon still appears on your computer.

TECH REVIEW

iPhone Air is *thin and light* – but is it worthy?

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Back in the fall, Apple sent me the new iPhone 17 Pro Max and the thinner and lighter iPhone Air.

I reviewed the 17 Pro Max, and I've been using it daily – and it is still great – but what about the Air? Is it a phone I'd want to use every day?

The Air and 17 Pro Max are similar in a lot of ways. Where they differ in size and a few other features like fewer cameras and battery life.

Apple has a stable of iPhone models, some of which have updated versions every year, such as the Pro and the Pro Max, while others are released and then discontinued after a few years, such as the Plus or the Mini, which I think is a good thing.

Cell phones are a mature market. We've pretty much settled into what we think a phone should look like and how it should behave. Where things get fun is when manufacturers get a little crazy and step outside the norm.

I'm talking about features like folding screens or phones of differing sizes.

Some people want as much battery life as possible (as with the Pro Max), while others just want a phone to be small (e.g., the Mini). Still others want a mix of larger screen and a thinner profile and lighter weight, as with the new iPhone Air.

Apple has the resources to take a swing at releasing phones like the Mini and the Air just to see if the demand is there. I also think Apple is trying out various features in their different models that might make it into future phones.

So, what does the Air have to offer?

Specs

The iPhone Air is a mid-sized phone with a 6.5-inch Super Retina XDR OLED display with a resolution of 2,736 by 1,260 pixels and a refresh rate up to 120 hertz. It is an always-on display with a dynamic island to house the front camera and sensors. The screen of the Air and 17 Pro and Pro Max are all the same, albeit with different sizes.

The front glass has Ceramic Shield 2, with three times better scratch resistance, and it is water resistant up to 6 meters for up to 30 minutes.

The Air is the only iPhone with a titanium frame. The other current iPhones are made of aluminum, but the Air needs the added strength of Titanium for its thin body, so you don't bend it when you sit with it in your back pocket.

Like the 17 Pro Max, it uses the A19 Pro chip with a 6-core CPU. It has a 5-core graphics processor and a 16-core neural engine.

Battery capacity is one of the necessary trade-offs of a thin chassis. The space inside the phone is smaller, but Apple says users will still get all-day battery life. It can charge through USB-C or wirelessly through 20W MagSafe.

The battery metric Apple lists on its website says the Air gets up to 27 hours of video playback, while the 17 Pro Max can play video for up to 39 hours on a charge.

Apple says the Air can be charged from empty to 50 percent in just 30 minutes with a 20W charger through USB-C or with a 30W charger through MagSafe.

The 17 Pro Max is Apple's flagship with three 48-megapixel Fusion cameras on the back and one 18MP center stage selfie camera on the front. The Pro Max cameras have an optical zoom range of .5x (ultra-wide angle) to 8x (telephoto).

In keeping with the smaller and lighter theme, the Air only has one 48MP Fusion main camera on the back with 1x and 2x optical zoom and the same 18MP selfie camera.

The camera sensors are exactly the same, so photos and videos look identical, but the difference in the zoom range is a big advantage for the 17 Pro Max.

The Air lacks some video recording modes of the Pro Max, like spatial video, ProRes video and Cinematic mode.

The Air measures 6.15 inches by 2.94 inches by 0.22 inches, and it weighs 5.82 ounces.

For comparison, the 17 Pro Max measures 6.43 inches by 3.07 inches by .34 inches, and it weighs 8.22 ounces.

The physical measurements don't sound all that different, but side by side, the size difference between the Air and 17 Pro Max is very noticeable.

How is it?

I can appreciate what Apple is trying to do with the Air, and I'm thrilled people who are clamoring for the thinnest and lightest phone will finally have an iPhone option.

The Air is quite an easy phone to carry.

In my hands, with my eyes closed, the Air feels like it's half as thick as the Pro Max, even though it's only a few millimeters thinner. Add a case and the Air feels closer in size to its thicker cousins.

I don't have the space or time to run a full-blown review or comparison. There are plenty of places to find more in-depth reviews online.

What I can say about using the Air is that, except for the difference in the cameras, I loved using the Air and really appreciated its size and had no issue with the battery lasting all day, but to be safe, I do top up the charge at my desk during the day.

That said, for me, the $200 difference in the price of the Air vs. the Pro Max is a worthy cost.

In a previous career, I was a newspaper photographer, and I'm the designated photographer in my family, so I'm willing to spend a bit more for better cameras.

Price and availability

The iPhone 17 Air starts at $999 for a model with 256 gigabytes of storage. You can add $200 to double the storage to 512GB and $400 to bump up to one terabyte.

The Air comes in Sky Blue, Light Gold, Cloud White and Space Black, and they are available at Apple.com and Apple retail stores, as well as at all the major carrier stores and retailers like Best Buy.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.

Apple / TNS

HOME & GARDEN

BACKGROUND: Living room after. The same living room reimagined after staging. **LEFT:** Living room before. A formal living room before staging.
Handout photos / TNS

Secrets of a stager

By CATHY HOBBS
Tribune News Service (TNS)

When it comes to selling real estate, staging is all about creating a space that appeals to the widest pool of buyers.

The goal isn't to showcase how you live, but to highlight the home's best features so potential buyers can emotionally connect with the property. Choices such as color, décor and presentation can make or break that connection, which is why a thoughtful, strategic approach to staging is essential.

Secrets of a stager

DEFINE THE ENTRY: First impressions matter especially when it comes to selling real estate. Many potential buyers make a decision about a home within the first 3 minutes of entry, so it is critical that a space makes an outstanding first impression.

DECUTTER WITH PURPOSE: Remove all items that you don't need. Start by removing seasonal items first, then keep only the essentials.

DEPERSONALIZE: Eliminate personal items. This includes everything from personal photographs to diplomas, trophies and religious references.

NEUTRALIZE: Individual colors tend to convey "cost and work" to a potential buyer. Many potential buyers look for a property that is "move in ready" and can view small tasks such as painting as a burden.

LEFT: Master bedroom after. The same master bedroom bright and light, after being staged and styled. **BELOW:** Master bedroom before. A master bedroom before staging

FIX IT, REPAIR IT: Repairs can help sink a sale. Instead of selling a property "as is", savvy sellers should instead complete those repairs that will help ensure a buyer sees a property in its best possible light.

MAXIMIZE NATURAL LIGHT: Light is one of the most important aspects of a space. Even if a room doesn't have windows, you can still infuse light into a room through the use of light colors and reflective surfaces such as mirrors.

STAGE FOR THE CAMERA: When it comes to home selling, it is all about "lights, camera, action." When staging, be sure to look for "hero" statements that will help to make a space photo worthy.

CREATE A COHESIVE FLOOR PLAN: Furniture placement is crucial for creating a cohesive floor plan and for circulation and flow.

CREATE A NEUTRAL COLOR STORY: A home should feel connected from room to room, one way to do this successfully is to connect rooms using color. Neutral colors appeal to the most number of potential buyers.

USE GREENERY: Greenery can often help a space feel homey and warm. Add greenery in interesting ways and in various rooms of the home.

Cathy Hobbs is the owner of Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes, a home staging company based in New York City (www.cathyhobbs.com). She is also the owner of Highland Passive House, a Home Staging + Design Center based in New York's Hudson Valley (www.highlandpassivehouse.com). Cathy's practical, how-to design advice can also be found in her book, "Home Design Recipes."

Should I repair or replace appliances?

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

We've all felt that sinking moment when a familiar hum goes silent: the fridge stops cooling, the washer won't spin or the oven won't heat on a busy weeknight. When an appliance quits, the big question follows fast: Do you repair it or replace it?

The right answer depends on age, repair cost, performance and whether a fix buys you meaningful extra life. With a little strategy, you can avoid overspending and keep your home running smoothly.

For most homeowners, the easiest starting point is the 50 percent rule: If the repair will cost less than half the price of a comparable new appliance, repair it. If it's more than half, replacement makes better long-term sense. But like most household decisions, the rule works best when you understand the context.

Start with current pricing. If you haven't shopped for appliances in years, sticker shock is real. Common household units run anywhere from a few hundred dollars to several thousand. A major repair on a midlife appliance may get you another few years of service and buy time to plan for a new model that fits your long-term budget.

Warranties and recalls tilt decisions heavily toward repair. If your item is still under warranty, the fix is often free or low-cost. Always check Recalls.gov or the Consumer Product Safety Commission before authorizing any work.

Dreamstime / TNS

Most appliances should last more than a decade with proper maintenance.

And then there's age. Most major appliances last 10 to 15 years, with outliers such as freezers and water softeners pushing well beyond. If your machine is bumping up against its expected lifespan, repair begins to look like a short-term patch rather than a long-term solution.

Finally, consider energy efficiency. Even modest improvements in refrigerator or washer design can trim utility bills. If your older model has been gulping power, upgrading may pay off faster than you think.

When to repair

Plenty of situations favor repair, especially for units that have been performing well up to the moment of breakdown. A newer appliance with a single failed component, for example, may still have years of usable life once it's fixed.

If performance has been strong, a sudden failure is often mechanical rather than systemic, and a qualified technician can restore it quickly. Repair also makes sense for homeowners with eco-friendly priorities. Extending the life of an efficient appliance keeps it out of the landfill, reduces manufacturing demand and often uses far fewer resources than building a new replacement.

And sometimes, you simply don't need new features. Many appliances evolve slowly; the dishwasher you bought a decade ago might still meet your needs just fine. A repair can maintain reliable performance without forcing a costly upgrade.

While DIY repairs can save money, be honest about your limits. Swapping an accessible part or cleaning a clogged filter is one thing; handling wiring, gas connections or internal plumbing is another. When the job involves safety risks or could void the warranty, call a pro.

When to replace

On the flip side, certain signs point clearly toward replacement. If your unit is approaching the decade mark and repair calls are becoming a yearly ritual, the math usually favors buying new. Hidden symptoms matter, too: A washing machine that no longer cleans well or a refrigerator that constantly cycles may be failing in ways unrelated to the immediate repair.

Poor energy performance is a big motivator. New models often carry dramatically improved efficiency ratings, especially in fridges, washers and dishwashers. What looks like a pricey replacement can quickly turn into a monthly savings plan on your utility bill.

And don't ignore modern features. If you've been eyeing smart controls, quiet-operation dishwashers, induction cooktops or advanced water-saving washers, a major breakdown is often the natural moment to upgrade.

Before finalizing a purchase, factor in installation costs, which can bump your total by $100 to $200 or more. Many manufacturers require professional installation to keep warranties valid. Still, if you've got the muscle and a truck, hauling the appliance yourself can shave off delivery fees.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

At resorts across the globe you'll find unique experiences and opportunities involving everything from snowshoeing and winter hiking to heli-skiing.
Andrea Vittorio Nissotti / Dreamstime / TNS

From *heli-skiing* to *snowshoeing*

A guide to the world's most epic winter travel experiences

By MIA TAYLOR
TravelPulse (TNS)

For outdoor adventure fans, there are few more exciting times of the year than winter, when snow has blanketed some of the country's and the planet's most stunning locations.

Whether it's legendary winter locales in the U.S. like Jackson Hole and Park City or somewhere more far-flung such as Switzerland, the getaway options offering immersive, high-adrenaline winter activities abound this time of year.

At resorts across the globe you'll find unique experiences and opportunities involving everything from snowshoeing and winter hiking to heli-skiing.

If some of those activities on your agenda, the good news we've rounded up five of the top experiences from around the world, where the winter wonderland setting is just as jaw-dropping as the high-octane adventure. If haven't booked a winter getaway yet, or are game to book another, read on for our picks.

Snowshoeing and winter hiking, Six Senses Crans-Montana, Switzerland

Six Senses properties are legendary for many reasons, including the opportunity they offer guests to reconnect with nature. And winter is a prime example of the brand's efforts on this front, particularly at Six Senses Crans-Montana (in Switzerland, not the U.S. state).

This high-altitude playground known for its champagne skiing and world-class sporting events offers a variety of immersive outdoor experiences, including two particularly noteworthy options: "Gourmet Snowshoeing Discovery Trail" and a "Return to the Roots" winter hiking journey.

"Snowshoeing and winter hiking at Six Senses Crans-Montana provide a serene, immersive way to discover the Alps beyond the ski slopes," says Barthelemy Deslarzes, experience supervisor at the luxe property. "These guided outings take travelers through quiet forests, panoramic ridgelines, and untouched snowfields, allowing them to connect with the landscape at a slower, more mindful pace."

Both options sound so appealing, it's hard to know where to start. Let's first discuss the gourmet snowshoeing discovery trail, shall we?

As part of this immersive, two-hour nature offering, guests (along with a guide) explore the beauty of Crans-Montana's winter wonderland during a magical snowy daytime or evening outing. You'll traverse on snowshoes through the mountains or nature surrounding the resort on a variety of trails.

If all the activity in the crisp winter air leaves you feeling a little famished, not to worry. Guests can request that Six Senses Crans-Montana's Experience Team bring hearty snacks, lunch or dinner.

The property's Return to the Roots experience, meanwhile, involves hiking to learn about animal tracks in the region and listening for the sounds of nature awakening after skiers have left the slopes. This nearly three-hour experience also offers the chance to warm up with homemade hot chocolate and local gingerbread after exploring the trails.

Both activities are available from mid-December until the end of February, with the potential for longer depending on weather.

Heli-skiing, The Lodge at Blue Sky, Auberge Collection, Park City, Utah

Park City has long been one of the top places in the United States for outdoor enthusiasts and that includes during winter.

One of the most memorable places to take it all in is The Lodge at Blue Sky, a getaway located on a 4,000-acre private ranch in the Wasatch Mountains. The Lodge offers an array of immersive seasonal experiences, from guided snowshoeing through quiet alpine forests to winter fly fishing, snowmobiling, and other curated outdoor pursuits designed to showcase the serene beauty of the surrounding landscape.

For those seeking the ultimate thrill, The Lodge at Blue Sky offers world-class heli-skiing. After breakfast and a safety briefing that takes place at a mountaintop yurt, you'll get to lift off toward untouched powder in the Wasatch and Uinta ranges, exploring everything from rolling intermediate terrain to steep, technical descents. No lift lines, no crowds, just pristine alpine bliss.

Rounding out the experience, participants enjoy access to some of the finest skiing in North America at Park City Mountain Resort.

Blue Sky's private Ski Lounge, designed in partnership with Arhaus and located at the base of the naturally quiet Silver Star chairlift, offers personalized fittings, pre-warmed boots, freshly tuned skis, and a cozy space for warm drinks and gourmet snacks between runs. There's also complimentary shuttles connecting the Lodge to the slopes, ensuring a fully curated mountain experience from start to finish.

"Taking guests heli-skiing for the first time is always unforgettable," says Mike Phillips, owner of The Lodge at Blue Sky. "And just before Christmas, I always make time for a trip into Old Town Park City. Watching ski patrol and instructors descend the mountain in Santa suits, torches in hand, is something you'll never forget. The Silver Star Café at the bottom is the perfect place to warm up and meet the Santas afterward."

The heli-skiing experience at The Lodge at Blue Sky is available from Dec. 5 until April 20.

Backcountry skiing, Alyeska Resort, Girdwood, Alaska

Do you find yourself daydreaming about having access to a helipad from which you're transported to one of the most legendary and breathtaking mountain ranges in Alaska? And once there, you spend blissful days of solitude skiing back-country skiing?

If the answer is yes, here's the good news: That's exactly what's available when you're a guest of the recently opened Black Diamond Club at Alyeska Resort. For those with a desire to get away from it all and truly immerse in a winter wonderland, there's a helipad from which helicopter and cat skiers can be taken to explore the legendary Chugach Mountain range. The range features everything from alpine bowls to colossal mountain faces, towering glaciers, sheltered trees, and steep powder skiing.

Chugach Powder Guides, who have expert knowledge of mountain skiing in the region, are also available to ensure that guess have unforgettable and safe backcountry experiences.

"Our single day skiing adventures access some of the best ski and snowboard terrain in Alaska," says Mountain Communications Manager Bayne Salmon, adding that "Heliskiing with Chugach Powder Guides is a great option for a first-time bucket lister or a seasoned heli skier."

Guests can also enjoy Alaska's first-ever Nordic Spa, a perfect après-ski experience, with a Twilight Soak available in the evenings from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Heli-skiing, snowshoeing, and ski-touring; Cabane Tortin, Verbier, Switzerland

Imagine a private James Bond-esque cabin perched high above a millenia-old Tortin glacier in Switzerland, where you'll have unparalleled vistas and total, serene isolation. And from here, you can engage in all manner of adventure activities including heli-skiing, tandem paraglider flights, snow-shoeing, and ski-touring.

At day's end, a private chef makes your meal, while you take in the star-filled skies. All of this is on offer at Europe's highest private-use mountain retreat: Cabane Tortin, which is located Verbier, Switzerland.

A stay at Cabane Tortin blends adventure, gastronomy, and rare seclusion at 9,800 feet. The exclusive-use property is accessible only by gondola, skis, or snowmobile, and once you've arrived and settled in, the staff can organize the adventure activity of your choice, whether its private ski instructions, heli-skiing, snow-shoeing, or something else.

"Having redefined one of Switzerland's most enduring traditions with exceptional luxury and a deep respect for the environment, Cabane Tortin has expanded its apres offering with mountaintop saunas, glacier sundowners, and immersive encounters with local cheesemakers, further elevating what it means to experience the Alps in contemporary style," says Tobias, Director of Cabane Tortin.

The property accommodates up to six adults and four young adults for exclusive private buyouts only.

Heli-skiing, snowshoeing and hiking, The Sylvan Lodge at Snake River Sporting Club, Jackson Hole, Wyoming

Jackson Hole is famous for its steep chutes and legendary powder. But that's not all there is to do here.

Sitting on 1,000 private acres along the Snake River and Bridger-Teton National Forest, The Sylvan Lodge at Snake River Sporting Club, offers the opportunity chase adventure all day long with front-door access to high mountain heli-skiing, carving up to 15,000 vertical feet across 305,000 acres of untouched terrain.

Or, for a slower paced experience, there's also snowshoeing and hiking.

"Adventure is right outside your door at The Sylvan Lodge," says Jennifer Williams, director of sales and marketing at The Sylvan Lodge. "Hop in a helicopter and soar over our terrain, which spans ranges south of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort—including the Snake River, Palisades, Wyoming, Teton, and Gros Ventre Mountains—landing in untouched powder for a backcountry run with High MTN Heli-Skiing," says. "Or take a guided snowshoe tour or winter hike across our 1,000-acre private grounds and soak in the peaceful beauty of a Wyoming winter."

By night, after you've enjoyed these activities, unwind in one of the property's rooftop hot tubs or gather at the Dark Sky Bar for après-ski cocktails. The property also offers such activities as Stargazing Fridays, Saturday night sleigh rides, and nightly rooftop S'mores.

Adventure winter activities, which are available exclusively to guests at the 38-room lodge, are on offer from December through the end of March.

TRAVEL TIPS

How to get TSA PreCheck using your credit card

Here's how to get TSA PreCheck by using your credit card.

How does TSA PreCheck work?

TSA PreCheck is an official trusted traveler program set up through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. It requires you to go through a short online application and in-person interview where you'll be fingerprinted and have your photo taken.

After you're approved, you'll have access to dedicated security lines and expedited security procedures at many U.S. airports, allowing you to keep your laptop and travel-sized liquids in your bag. Plus, you'll keep your wait time to a minimum since 99 percent of TSA PreCheck members wait less than 10 minutes to make it through security, according to the TSA.

How to get TSA PreCheck free with a credit card

There are several ways a credit card can help you get TSA PreCheck for free:

- The easiest way is by paying for a Global Entry or TSA PreCheck application with a card that reimburses it. You'll automatically receive a statement credit to cover the cost.
- You could use the rewards you've earned through an airline or hotel loyalty program to pay for it.
- You could use your credit card rewards to cover the fee.

Using a statement credit to get TSA PreCheck

Nearly 40 credit cards offer an application fee credit for TSA PreCheck or Global Entry, and that includes business credit cards and co-branded airline and hotel credit cards. However, it is important to note that most travel credit cards that cover TSA PreCheck come with an annual fee of anywhere from $95 to $695.

While there are travel credit cards with no annual fee, it's uncommon for them to include a TSA PreCheck benefit. That said, occasionally you may be able to find a travel card with this benefit and no annual fee – but there will likely be a catch.

For example, the Capital One Spark Miles for Business card, which comes with no annual fee the first year, offers an up to $120 reimbursement credit for Global Entry and TSA PreCheck every four years. However, this card charges an annual fee every year thereafter.

Using a loyalty program to get TSA PreCheck

Many airline and hotel loyalty programs allow you to redeem the rewards you earn for TSA PreCheck. Some of these programs include:

- IHG One Rewards
- Marriott Bonvoy
- Orbitz Rewards Platinum Members
- United Mileage Plus

However, this method usually isn't the best option since you'll typically spend $100 or more in rewards – which is more than the cost of a TSA PreCheck membership. If you have a bank of points or miles that are about to expire, then it could be a decent option.

These loyalty programs also occasionally offer promotions and deals on TSA PreCheck, which may help you to get a discounted membership or a free membership with certain levels of elite status.

Using credit card rewards to get TSA PreCheck

If you're not interested in a travel credit card or paying an annual fee, rewards from one of the top cash-back cards could help you cover your TSA PreCheck fee. These credit cards allow you to earn rewards or welcome bonuses that you can then redeem as statement credits to cover your TSA PreCheck application.

Bankrate's take: If you travel internationally and would like to shorten your trips through customs, consider applying for Global Entry instead of TSA PreCheck. Global Entry includes all the benefits of TSA PreCheck plus expedited customs screening for travelers entering the United States, and membership costs $120 for five years.

Which credit card with TSA PreCheck credits is right for you?

When determining which travel credit card is right for you, take a few factors into account, including the card's

- annual fee
- general rewards structure
- additional benefits

You'll also want to think about how it fits into your current spending habits and lifestyle. If a particular card is only appealing because it pays for TSA PreCheck, then you should consider a different card that better aligns with your spending habits and interests – even if that card is just a general rewards card that will help you to earn enough cash back to cover the application fee.

Keep in mind that many business, airline and hotel credit cards offer a TSA PreCheck benefit. If you own a business, you may want to consider a general business travel credit card (which offers more flexibility) or a credit card for an airline or hotel that you use frequently (which will offer airline- or hotel-specific perks).

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